We welcome Rabouin High School, New Orleans, Louisiana

I felt like a writing program that allows the students to speak their mind about anything they choose to write about could provide educators a glimpse at how it must feel to be a teen in post-Katrina New Orleans. They are not graded or censored in any way. What you are about to read comes from the heart and souls of the youth at Rabouin High School in ol' New Orleans.

check out the rest of Dennis Monn and his students pieces on pages 4-6

EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 12.02

Welcome back you avid and very loyal Beat editorial note readers. You are the few who actually pay attention to this page, and we very much appreciate your eyes and the time you give this note each week. This week we are proud to include in this fabulous issue a host of writings from our friends at Rabouin High School, which is located in the heart of New Orleans, LA and we have an ol' friend stepping up to the plate to share his thoughts with you all. That ol' friend is Siliva Mortenson. By way of background, we have known Siliva for years. He was one of the very first BWO (Beat WithOut) writers, when he would drop mad game on us Beat readers from the CYA (California Youth Authority) back in the late 1990s. Upon his parole from CYA, he hooked up with us and worked fulltime for The Beat Within for several years, as a very important piece to the puzzle, before Siliva parted on a new journey. In late 2006 we hooked up with Siliva once again and the timing couldn't be better. We so welcome his presence, his expertise, and his commitment to The Beat and himself. The man, like The Beat Within is on a mission and we are honored to be apart of this ride! With that said, we welcome the thoughts of Siliva Mortenson in this editorial note. Siliva!

We are now several weeks into the New Year and a lot of good dialogue has come from all of you who have participated in our workshops. One of the main thoughts that has been expressed is that you all would like 2007 to be better than 2006. I also feel the same way. But what it comes down to is how much do we want it to be better? What are we willing to do to make it better? More importantly, what are we willing to sacrifice to make it better?

A lot of times we have very good/strong ideas, but we don't put all the necessary work into making that idea possible. A thought is just a thought unless we put some action behind it.

A lot of you have also said that you would like to make it better but that it's hard. If you already know this then you know what to expect. Let me say this, it is only hard if we make it hard. See I personally know and have been through the struggles that you are currently in. I have been in your shoes and have moved on to places that you have yet to go. (This is nothing to brag about but I want you to know that I relate.) For some of you, you are on your way to those places. But you still have get back and can make a better life for yourself, family and loved ones, if you choose to do so. For the majority of you that have a chance, are you willing to take full advantage of that chance? How many more chances do you think you have left? Do you plan on ringing in 2008 in that same place? In those same clothes?

Let me share something with you all that hopefully puts things into perspective. I was sentenced as a juvenile to a lot of time. During that time I did some things that I wasn't able to do for myself in the outside world, due to inside and outside influences. Like graduating from high school, after a lot of catching up on (school) credits. Eventually taking some college courses and maintaining a good GPA. I learned a couple of trades and becoming quite good at them. I also took the classes required for parole and also some voluntary classes that helped me stay on track. This was after some years of messing up while inside.

All this helped me once I got back into society. One of my downfalls however was the thought, after I'm done with parole I'll catch up on the time I missed out on. Catching up to me meant smoking weed, drinking, hanging with old friends, etc. Basically doing some of the same things I was doing when I got sent away the first time.

This eventually led to me forgetting some of the things I had learned while inside, in order to value being on the outside. Back to incarceration was around the next corner.

So now I'm back in the daily struggle just like you all. Except I know I can't catch up with time that has already passed. I value this freedom a lot more than what others may think, say, or feel. After years of being away again, people are still doing the same thing with very little accomplishments, considering the time they've had to work with. But that's them and this is me. I do however use them as motivation in my daily struggle.

I think back to when I was living that other life. I put a lot of energy into that life. So you know what, the same energy I used towards negative I now choose to do so for positive. That goes for me being cool off the weed and drink. Hanging out on the block, or doing what I know isn't right. Putting myself into any situation that could be detrimental to my freedom. I know what all this will bring me.

So my 2007 consists of continuing to value and spend time with family and close loved ones, because they were always there for me. Continue to work and appreciate what I do on a daily basis, because honestly, I learn from you all on a daily basis. Start my college classes next week and put some real time into my school and studies. All this I believe and whole heartedly know will make my 2007 better.

All I can do for myself is do what's right today. Tomorrow will come but I'll be stronger then, because of today. I won't cheat myself by giving up because I know I'm working towards a better future. This isn't just for 2007. It's for life. I know God will provide a way as long as I do my part. I believe in Him as He believes in me. But I also believe in you all.

I believe you all can have all you want if you put the necessary work to get it. Do some of you know how talented and smart you really are? We are blown away, literally, when we read some of your work. We are amazed at how articulate some of you are. Imagine how far you can go if you were to put your all into doing what's best for you? Imagine how many lives you'd touch? Not to mention those you know and love, especially the little ones that are looking up to you. As some of you have said and already know, you can't have one foot in and one foot out. But it is ultimately your choice.

Strong words from a man that cares and always, keeps it real. Moving right along, here are the topics that were address in the workshops we did prior to our Christmas break. Check them out!!

Our first topic, "Has The Hall Helped You In Any Way?" We know that being here in juvenile hall can be a really bad experience for you. Sometimes, you leave these places worse than you came in. But we're wondering whether it's all bad... Are there things about being here that have given you new strength? We have heard many, many complaints about juvenile hall (and we believe them). But we hear a lot less about those things that might make you better, stronger, wiser, smarter. So, can you lace us with some examples...

Our second topic, "What If The World Was A Stage?" -Take a second to imagine the world as a stage... What would be your role on that stage? What part would you play? Would you be the main character, or just someone in the background? Would you play the role of the thief, drug dealer, the 'bad' guy? Or would you have a more noble role like the hero, the knight in shining armor, the prince that could awake the princess with a kiss, (or the princess that could awake the prince with a kiss)? Would you be teacher or student, or...?

If the world were a stage, what would your role be?

The third topic, "Do Your Dreams Teach You About You?" -Some of our dreams are beautiful, serene, full of fun and/or magic. Others, though, can be frightening, more like nightmares. But all of our dreams come out of our own heads, out own thoughts. Have you ever had a dream that seemed like it was trying to tell you something, or warn you about something important about to happen, or something about yourself you didn't know? Have you ever awakened from a dream that you can remember, and said to yourself, "Wow! I'll have to think about that!" Have you ever had a dream that changed your life? Tell us about one of those meaningful dreams, good or bad, and how it affected you.

Lastly, "New Year..."

Knowing the topics, lets now give b-i-g time props to our POW (Piece Of the Week) recipients. They are County Snack, Jennifer, Lil' Mama, and Conflict all from the 150 Crew, B Littles from SF/YGC, Uriel (writes 2), Jesse from Santa Cruz, Kyle, G Poet (writes 3) Oscar, Manuel, and Samantha from Arizona.

OK, editorial note readers, this stellar and very soulful issue goes out to an entertainer who touched many of us over the years, the "Godfather Of Soul" James Brown, who passed away on Christmas Day. Rest in Peace James Brown (1933-2006). There are no words. Just music. Now if we could put on "Super Bad Parts 1 & 2." What's your favorite JB song? See you all next week.

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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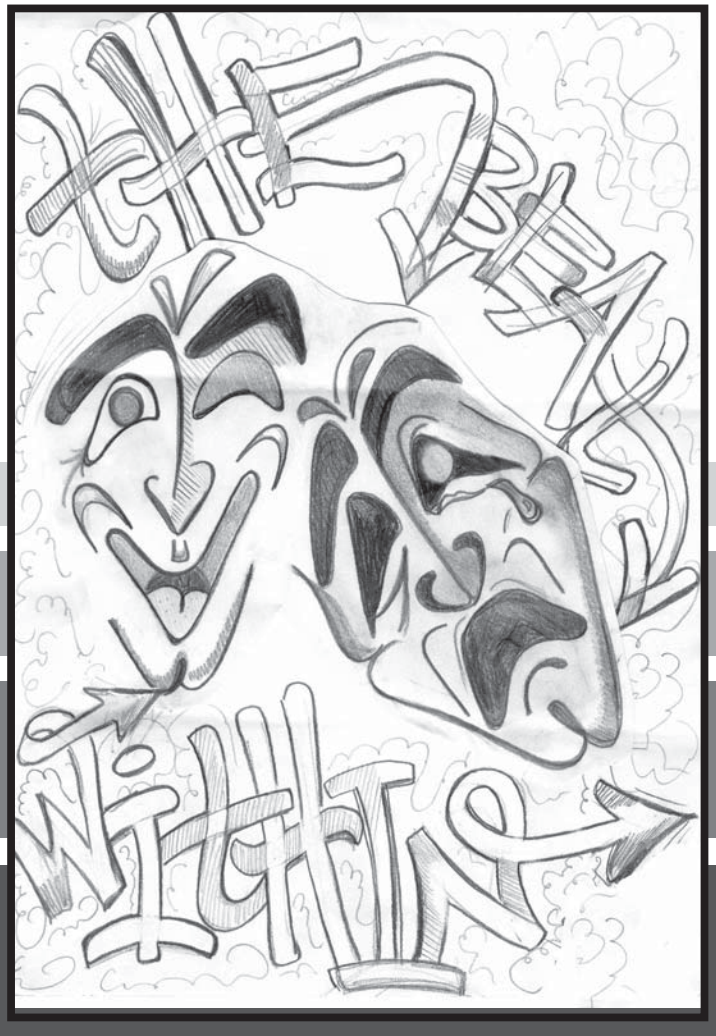


From The Beat: We are thrilled and honored to feature in tis issue the first installment of the heartfelt and amazing voices from the students of Rabouin High School, which is located in the heart of New Orleans, LA. Many of you readers know we visited and spoke to Rabouin High School back in early December 2006, thanks to our friend, school librarian, Dennis Monn. We left the school that day with a great desire to work with Dennis and his students. We saw the need for The Beat Within to play a role with the school and that we have, thanks to Dennis and his believing in the voices of the young people. It is our goal to also send Dennis as many books as possible, given his library is in need of books, books and more books, thanks to post Katrina and FEMA, bottom-line, the school is in need of plenty, so what little we can do, we will do. We already can't wait to get this Beat in the hands of the children at Rabouin High School, and we can't wait for their next installment. Read on! Thank you writers for coming from the heart.

From Rabouin High School In New Orleans

The students are certainly excited about the opportunity of having their voices heard and we all thank the staff at The Beat for generously giving us this opportunity. As you all probably know we in New Orleans are wounded and I'm almost too tired to even talk about it. Stacks of poems are accumulating on my desk, waiting for me to write an introduction before sending to The Beat for publishing, and I can't find the words to express my anger at a system that continually lets the children down and sadness about a community being taken over by violence. Our school has lost a student and teacher to violence in just the last two months. Murdered, shot down in the street. This is the reality of a life these children live and words can't express the sadness I feel. Children should not have to deal with this, ever! We as a community must come together and listen to these kids and protect them from things they have no control.

I felt like a writing program that allows the students to speak their mind about anything they choose to write about could provide educators a glimpse at how it must feel to be a teen in post-Katrina New Orleans. They are not graded or censored in any way. What you are about to read comes from the heart and souls of the youth at Rabouin High School in ol' New Orleans.

Thanks for Reading,
Dennis Monn
Librarian
Rabouin High School
New Orleans, LA

Judging a Book By Its Cover

(From Experience)
People sometimes say that you should never
judge a book by its cover
because you would never get to know what its about
or know it's true meaning or purpose.
If you judge a book by its cover when you see it for the first time
you can be missing out on a part of your life or an important life lesson,
that's why you should always be nice to everybody
you meet because you will never get a second first chance.
Others say when you immediately judge that book by its cover
you will never get another chance to rethink it over and
you could be making the biggest mistake of your life.
Just like books, people can also have many different pages
of their life because no one has the same life experiences
and nobody lives the same life.
Life experiences go based on book judging because you could meet the happiest person one day and the next day the happiness has disappeared.

By judging a book by its cover you should automatically know to keep your friends close and your enemies even closer because you judged that book by its cover. You probably decided to do the worst possible thing you could do.

-Jeralnisha H.

Where Would I Be?

If I didn't have any friends
where would I be?
having no love
not being loved
where would I be?
if I didn't have a mom but a dad,
and he beat and raped me
where would I be?
people getting killed
could I truly make it through the world
if they had drug dealers standing in front of my building every night
and shootings
where would I be?
my big sister walking the street and having a pimp
what could I do if my dad died and I had a little sister and I had to take care of her where would I really be.....
I just want to know where would I be or make it through life with all this drama!

-Unsign

Listen Up!

Well my name ain`t refugee, or Hurricane Katrina survivor,
But it`s Alexus,
you know a citizen of America, Louisiana and most of all New Orleans.
So many people think that God sent the hurricane to destroy all the evil people here.
But if that was the case then something should of happen to
Las Vegas, Brooklyn, Queens, Miami, Los Angeles and
Especially Washington DC
I chose these cities 'cause all the stuff they don't show on TV
Doesn't happen
Like for instance Washington D C and all the dirty lowdown stuff that they do and stuff like with the government is so messed up now-a-days.
But they don`t show that on TV
It's like the senators, federal government, the press and whoever else
They want what they can get out of it.
Making money off of people who have been hurt and
Devastated which just sickens me.
But the point `bout it is a whole bunch of other people need that money to get a house and fix it.
Plus they fixing the Dome, hotels and other businesses when people don't even have a place to stay and lay their head and the government is giving money but they make it seem like that's gonna really be enough.
Yeah right!
But things are changing, people are changing whether for the good or for the bad, how `bout you?

-Alexus

RIP – Watch Over Me

Resting in peace
Your actions and funniness
Still gets to me.
Your loving, caring, and realness
I will still remember you
Even though I will always see you every night in my dreams
I just want you to be alive
Standing by my side
I will be writing your name
Over and over
In my poem book
Including the pictures of memories that I took
I wish you had a chance to notice
how much you mean and have meant to me.
You were the one who tried to keep in touch with the family.
From my unknown sisters
To my unknown brothers
You told me right from wrong
Told me that I was going to be strong in my growing life
But it's too bad you saw the light
So that you could see if you were right
You were a strong woman and I looked up to you
But now where you're at the color is blue
The last time I talked to you
You were okay

-Kanethia

Crying Eyes

It is too much to say and too much to do.
So much that I can't find the time to say how much I love you.
There is not an ear so small
a person too tall
that can sit there and let you walk,
walk without you knowing the way that they feel.
So being a person with too much pride
not wanting to show the soft side.
I'm trying to hold it in,
with the thought that I might lose my best friend,
who held me up when I was down and has always stuck around.
Through thick and thin, and to the very end.
So with this thought he's going to be gone,
gone forever and will never come back,
a tear drops and a voice in the back of my head is saying
it can't hurt to cry,
another drop and more are following behind.
And I realize that I'm not the only one
who is hurt sad and in distress
so now I can rest and get that load off my chest.
So now I know when crying starts don't tear it apart, just let it be
so wipe those crying tears from among you
and let me be the person that I stand today.

-Amber D.

Is Blood Really Thicker Than Water??

Lawd, I don't know what happened to us, we all used to be like Bonnie to each other's Clyde! I never thought that these girls that I love would go so far away from me.

Me, Charie, a girl, who loves her family, who this family over all her frienny's! I don't know why we all went our separate ways, not calling each other for a limit of days, but only for a friendship that does not pay, and what I mean by a friendship that does not pay, means that my girls just swayed away, for a different take. We were the perfect type of family, yes, yes, yes, the family that everybody would envy. Everybody would say, those girls would never part, and yes I took that shhh to the heart. It's not that I'm jealous of their frienny'z, but hey, they put frienny'z over family! I really love my family, and my family is everything , and mean a lot to me!

-Charielle R.

Do I Fly Or Do I Fall

Inside I feel very cold.
I think it's because I lost my soul.
I lost my soul to the street.
Now my heart does not beat.
I suddenly drop to my feet because my heart will not beat.
In the cold streets where I lie because losing my soul caused me to die.
Now I stand still in front of heavens gate
Waiting for the lord to tell me my faith.
Do I fly or do I fall?
So he tells me that I fall.
So I sadly turn away and begin to crawl.

-Saquilla H.

My Real Trade

I think God, he sent you to me
for you and I were meant to be.
You always tripping 'bout how I flirt with other boys
but the only thing you do is play with your toys.
Yeah you cute
Yeah you fine
boy you always on my mind.
You play wit' my heart,
but can't nothin' tear us apart.
So you do you and I do me
Don't get made when you see me on your street
posted with my new trade that love me for me.
And I don't have to impress him by the way I am dressing....

-Brianisha aka Ne-Ne

How I Feel

Sometimes I feel like no one cares
but all the while my mom is there.
I have no dad that I can see
or when I come home to hug me.
Sometimes I feel like just saying forget everything and everybody.
But I don't.
I overcome all of it.
Then I look on the bright side and still I rise
to know that I have a lot to live for.

-Jessica T

Why My Grandma?

You say you will never leave me or forsake me 'till the day God took you from me. I'll love you and you will never be forgotten. This is to my grandmother...

I remember when you use to sit me down and talk to me about the things I did wrong. My grandma as a 61 year old woman who loved her children and grandchildren .You say you will always love me no matter what happens but now I can't hear it from you because you're gone. I know you struggled. I know you were in pain, but that still doesn't make up for the pain - you left me. The pain I feel right now will never go away, because you was the only one who listened to how I felt .You made me feel better and there is nobody who can take your place.

-Shyniece V.

Stealing

I'm tired of all of the stealing because the night before Thanksgiving, 10:00 that night, three men came to my house backed up in the driveway. They stole my 800 dollar front door and my 500 dollar light fixers. They were so good looking. I was so mad I couldn't even move at all. My legs were shaking, my head was hurting so bad it felt like I had drums rolling in my head. We had to stay in the abandoned house. Just me, my mom and my dad. We were so scared. We had no electricity in the house and no hot water. We had no stove because we hade an electric stove. They cut the water pipe and we hade no water going to the kitchen sink. We had to warm water in the microwave that night.

Now I am getting happy because the electricity is on and the beds are in the house. I am in my room and got food in the refrigerator. I am so happy. I like my new house. It is beautiful. We got a new door and some new light fixers.

There's one thing we have not figured out, who robbed us? All we know is that they have a big shinny grill on the truck and there are three of them. We are thinking that it was one of the people who have been in the house before and knew what was in there and what they wanted to take out the house before they even came that night.

-Anthony L.

A True Calliope Gangsta

I was lost when my cousin Slam died
No pill or nothing could stop the pain I felt inside
So I stayed in my room all week and cried
No one in this world would know how tight we were tied
I jus can't believe this happened to him
Why did it have to be ten ninjas on two men
They rolled up in a black car and started bustin shots
Then the next thing you know my cousin got shot
He was layin' there still breathin'
It hurt the most to see my cousin puffin' and wheezin'
He was gasping for his breath and just couldn't find it
All you hear is his family saying keep trying
He was a Calliope gangsta
My cousin was like damn why did they have to kill that ninja
Its okay though 'cause you know my people busted back
Slam will always be a legend and that's a fact
The lost of a loved one man it hurts
To see my cousin getting buried in dirt
As much as it hurts to write this poem
I gotta do it because them boys was wrong
I thought I wasn't gonna be shhh without you either
I love you Slam rest in peace your cousin Nitra

-Danitra A.

The Truth

The hood don't affect me
Because I feel it's in me
All the crime
People don't do the time

Overall I would never leave the hood
If I could
Some may think it would be better if they should leave the hood

All the fights
The mess
I don't like the hood any less
So me what I say the hood is a mess

But I would never leave the hood if I could
Thinking I SHOULD!!!

That's the truth
How I feel about the HOOD!!

-Monteka B.

You Must Not Know 'Bout Me

You must not know 'bout me
I am out that S-B-P (Saint Bernard Parish)
Katrina hit us but we came back
Nothing can take New Orleans off the map.
We five-oh-four all day
Nothing can take us away
We stick together through thick and thin
'cause as you know we from New Orleans.
But yeah, with all the killing
We still rise
'Cause you know where we from the city of New Orleans
We are survivors.

-Jessica T.

Ignorant

What does this word mean?

That your dumb and don't give a ef? stupid and losing it?
Can someone explain it?
I mean 'cause every time I look
There's this word

IGNORANT
I=intelligent
G=graceful
N=nice
O=optimistic
R=resourceful
A=attitude
N=nurturing
T=trustworthy

-Shelly F.

My Expression, The Way I Feel

The way feel I is the way any teenager would I feel very depressed.
I feel like that because of all the crime and murder that's going on in the city of New Orleans. This is a feeling that every one should feel because every night you turn on the news at night you hear the same thing, a killing in the different areas of the city and keep hearing the same thing it's very depressing especially for the family of the persons that were killed.
In my mind I feel that it needs to stop.

-Christian G.

Home

At home, I like to read in a very peaceful tone
to myself and nobody else.
Things gets crazy –
When you trying to do something,
instead, my family acts like a bunch of wild monkeys.

It seems the same way as it is day after day
emotionally drained until your tears start to disappear-
becoming dizzy.
At home is a way of taking deep breaths
not just being a creep.

-Jewel S.

Starving

Walking down these halls
'bout ready to eat!
to eat man!
I go to the cafeteria and couldn't get a slice bread with some meat man.
Walk out the cafeteria stomach growlin' and prowlin' man,
I look to my right and see a dude
with a hot sausage sandwich jumpin' and hollarin' man.
It's a shame we can't get no real food,
I'm gonna go and report them to child services dude.
Hey that's all I got to say,
come holla at me when you get some real food later on today.

-Torin

Confused

I am confused
which one
should I choose as my boo?

I am thinking to myself,
Could it be you?

All I am saying is that I am in love with two!
But all I need is one boo
one love that's true...
So is it you?
'cause I am confused

-Kia M.

Life and Death

Life is a precious thing and should
Not be wasting on some foolish things
I know someone who always getting into some tuff
and I don't want to be like him at all because
he never finished school and he is a drop-out
and no one wants to be around him because he's into heavy stuff
like rock, cocaine, weed, heroin needles.
And no one and I mean no one likes him
Or loves him because what he into and I for that hate him for what he has put my mom through.
That's right, that bastard is my dad.
My mom was so tired of the lies
she threw him out of the house,
So who knows where he's at?
He is in jail

-L-D

Why Crime

why crime?
what do people do wrong to die so early?
banking,
making money and having things of your own
is a proplem now,
today.
people who don't have to rob and kill
for things they don't earn.
if one thing goes wrong they think to kill is right.
but if they don't know
taking people lives is not the
right way to go

-Ganell D.

Ghetto Twins /Remix Mama Hurting Baby

Beating on the ground
Mud on my hands
Trying to be strong
Trying stop the pain
Daddy baby why you did so wrong
That's why my daddy gone
Baby daddy was still in that thug life
And mama know where he took her
And everything was alright
Mama fighting daddy
I put candy on the table
And every body went crazy
Mama fighting daddy.

-Myquelle J.

How I Feel

My eyes is read
So is my bed
But usually not in the head
But this time it was on a sled
It was cold
I had a jacket
But it was ripped
Well you know how I feel
If you don't, I'm 'bout to fill you in
Now you know how I feel

-Gerald L.

Sometimes

Sometimes I love you,
Sometimes you make me feel blue.
Sometimes I feel used,
Sometimes I feel confused.

Sometimes I feel okay,
Sometimes my words to you are beyond say.
Sometimes I think about telling you the truth,
Sometimes I won't.
Sometimes I think about telling you I love you,
Sometimes I don't.

Sometimes I need your love.
Sometimes I think about knowing I can get it from above.
Sometimes I feel like you aren't here to stay,
Sometimes I think how can I make my way?

-Uriah A. R.

Summertime

It's summer time
It's hot outside
The sun is shining
Little children having water fights and playing in their swimming pool.
On the weekdays little children going to summer camp and teachers are going to teach them.
When the summer is over the children are sad and the mean people are glad.
They couldn't stand the children to have fun since the summer first began.

-Wilneka

Lost Child

Lost child?
yeah that's me.
Why?
'cause i don't know were i am
oh i am very lost
in my head
in my brain
around my friends
when this is all because of you
but talk about you
but i am all about you
with you
i don't know what path to take
doing nothing
but sometimes you always told me to just have faith and believe.

-Nadia R.

My Life

My life is so good because i am glad that i am back at home in New Orleans.
It is also good because i love all my family. The main thing i am happy about is that i am in school.

- Ty W.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Bloodshed

bloodshed
four, three, red, azul, cafén (red, blue and brown)
whatever you throw up and bang and claim
bloodshed
putting tu familian (your family) to bed
six feet with a bullet to his or hear head
bloodshed
para tu raza (for your people)
your town
so you can prove to your homeboys
that ... "you're down"
walking around with that colorful
bloodshed
belt hanging-out to the ground
with those tattoo dots
that are soon for sure
going to make your life stop
even help you to sooner find a grave
you won't fall asleep peacefully
rather fall to your knees
and watch yourself bleed
with your homeboys and family crying
"oh god please don't take them from me"
¿No sabes que nosotros somos familia, que
nosotros samos mexicaños?
You don't know we are family,
We are Mexicans)
we gotta be down with each other
not the barrios
yeah we all gots pride
but why shoot each other down
just to prove ... " we gee-ride" and get down
we making ourselves look like payasos (clowns)
clowns con un solo tear with no fear
with hair-nets and mongolians
bandanas y cortez's
colorful bloodshed
the gangstas love wearin'
'till death do them part
and i bet then you'll wish to god
"please give me another heart"
to do right and think twice

-Jennifer, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You write to those most in need of taking in your words to plant like a seed in their hearts, minds and souls, so that like their grandparents they can live to grow old and see their children succeed as their children's children play at their knees. Then they can look back and teach about the crazy days when brown on brown violence ruled the streets in a war begun over drug profit distribution in California prisons. The children will find it hard to believe their grandpa's stories as he tells of G-rides and being down for some barrios glory. "Grandpa? Mexicans were killing Mexicans on North American streets?" — "Yes, and it's a miracle I survived and remained free, but I quit the gang, married your mom's mom, and the rest is history. And it all began with this poem I read in a magazine called The Beat."

Making Her Weaker

molesting is something
some girls go through
gettin' molested by
they' brothers, cousins
or even street fools
now ain't that funny
he touching her body
in these filthy ways
making her heart speed
like she in some kinda race
she try to say stop
but he already on top
whispering threats in her ear
each push, she cries a tear
he won't stop
now he's covering her mouth
after a second he just stopped
and walked out the room
she sat there wit' tears in her eyes
wondering why
she can't just die
she go through this every night
she think — damn
he ain't got no life
where the hell is his wife

-County Snack, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you choose to write poetry from your own life experience, it's so powerful it'll blast the heart of anyone who hears it! You take it up close and personal, and the pain remains forever with no reversal — it gets planted in the mind and heart of your reader like a curse that will damn the rapist in each and every case where such low-life perpetrators seem to escape civil justice. Even a God of mercy could never forgive this crime, and so the unrepentant sinner will feel righteous wrath in God's time. Meanwhile remember, the stigma is not on the victim because it was not her decision but on him who deserves society's derision. Thanks for this honest, raw and awfully good poem. You're writing for all those other victims who feel so all alone, and teaching them to stay strong — for there is no shame in such dreadful pain.

My Philosophy

It might not be such a bad idea if I never went home again.
I don't wanna stay here but I don't wanna go back.
Don't belong anywhere I been.
Just a lonely kid on a mission to reach the end.
I'm through being good but I'm through wit' the hood!
Retreat to a secluded area in the woods!
'Cause I'm a grow old alone and now that's just the way I want it!
Die and go to hell in a tux wit' gasoline on it.
That's what I deserve so this what I get.
Fools lookin' for me.
No they waitin' on my return meet me at juvy.
I got nothin' to lose nothin' to live for.
The only thing I got don't want me no more!
But I never needed you anyway.
Bullets fly any way I could die any day.
So I don't give a damn 'cause I'm a die anyway.
My heart has shriveled to the size of a skittle.
Packin' big hate with love so little.
Will I make it home wit' my car bullet-riddled?
I don't care if I ever get back there.
'Cause hell's appealing more than home at this point.
I'm sorry if I let you down!
Peace to my peeps heaven is callin' y'all.
Now I got a headache I'm a get some Tylenol.
Jus' B Littles
Kick, pushin' and coastin' 'till the end of time.

-B Littles LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a very disturbing piece, given you feel there is no place for you to go. You're going through this intense pain, especially while you're incarcerated and can't do much to be with the people who could make it better. Keep yourself safe! Stay focused on you. Get your self in a place that will allow you to grow, try school! Or how 'bout a job with The Beat!?

I don't wanna stay here but I don't wanna go back.

Don't belong anywhere I been.
Just a lonely kid on a mission to reach the end.

How I Started Selling My Body

I wish I could be home, not locked up but — home! It all started when I ran away from home. No money. Just me and my friend.

We needed some money quick but fast! So I see this girl who I see all the time. She never hangs out like me and my friend, but we see each other. She was older than me. But one day this particular time, I saw her. She was by herself, not with the dude I always used to see her with.

It seems like she know' I need money, 'cause I was walking down the block when she stopped and asked me, "Do you have something to do? 'Cause you look bored."

I was like, "No."

So she said, "Want to just ride and kick it?"

So like a stupid ass, I went, and we started talkin'. Then I asked her, "Where is that dude I use' to always see you wit'?" I knew he had to be her boyfriend, 'cause she was half-white and he was a ninja I seen in the 'hood.

She said, "Oh, my pimp. He locked up right now." She said it perfectly normal. I was shocked at how she said it. But then she said, "You got some money?"

I said, "No." Then I told her about how I ran away and stuff.

Then she asked me, "Do you want to get some money? Fast?"

So, you know, I'm like, "Yeah."

We go to East Fourteenth Street, and she tells me how to do it. "You know, stand on the corner. If you see a ninja walk the other way, put your head down. That's a pimp. If you smile in a ninja face, you want to come home and screw with him. When a trick pull' over, ask if he' the police. Touch his privates. Let him touch you. Get in the car. Make sure you got your knife and pepper spray in your purse. Date him. That mean sex. You know."

So I say, "Okay."

I make a hundred dollars my first date, and I'm like, "Cool!" I make like seven hundred dollars in like four hours. So I get a motel and some clothes and stuff, toothbrush. And me and Gigi (that was her name) getting out there. Till one night, I see my older cousin, and I run so that he don't see me!

Then I tell her that we got to get out of Oakland if I'm go' dress like a hoe, and she said, "You got enough money to go wherever you want."

So I say, "Okay, Sacramento."

She say', "Okay, I know where the track is out there."

So that night I get enough money to stop for awhile, and I go home. I go home and don't even think about it. Oh, by the way, of course I never told my mom 'bout this. Anyway, I don't even go out there, and a couple of months go by.

Then I start thinking, "Maybe it will be fun if I had a ninja to hoe for, maybe a pimp, as Gigi calls them." So I talk to this ninja (not my boyfriend) about it, and he like he don't care. And then I start hoein' for him. But he wasn't the kind of pimp I was looking for.

I was looking for a more you-my-bitch-and-you-do-what-I-say kind of pimp. So I'm thinking if I talk to a pimp who tries to make me hoe for them, it will work. And I try it wit' this ninja name Chris — well, at least that's what I'll call him. I don't want to use his real name 'cause too many people know him. But he was ... well, at least I thought he was the pimp I was looking for.

By this time, I had my cousin hoeing with me. (Now I feel bad about that!) Anyway, Chris used to be hella mean, but when I tried to leave him, that's when I saw his true colors! He would see me by my house and put me in the car and say, "Why you ain't called? Hoe, I need some money!" Eventually, I started doing everything he said.

One time he took away my phone, 'cause he knew that was the worst thing he could do, and he kept it for five days. On the fifth day he said, "If you want it, you got to give me four hundred dollars."

I was like, "Ninja, that's all you had to say from the beginning. I'll get that for you. Fast, baby!" And I still loved him, even after he beat the hell out of me.

But now I'm locked up for leaving home while on probation. And, plus, I never even got busted hoeing — so, when I go home, I won't even think about leaving 'cause I know that would hurt my mom.

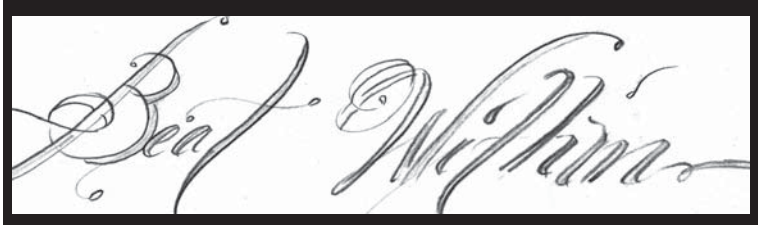
Well, I want everybody to know: That is not the life! That is hella disrespectful, not only to you but to your parents! — But them ninjas do not care about you. All they want is your sex and the cash your sex can make.

Everybody can change. If I could do it, you can! 'Cause believe me, you don't want to be called a "hoe-bitch" for the rest of your life. And there are so many STD's out there, and some of them can mess your cooty-cat up. I'm lucky that I never caught one.

Remember: Love is not being a ninja' hoe! All y'all be safe. I love everybody. — And your family loves you! — Well, this is for all y'all with love from ...

-Lil' Mama, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Goodness gracious! Yeah, that old square phrase describes you and the power of the story you just related! Way too many young girls in Oakland get lured into this life, just like you originally, for money that comes faster than a girl-child could ever imagine. And at first (if you're lucky) it seems exciting and you feel powerful, 'cause money is power, right? Then in your story, when you caught sight of your cousin, you got a reality flash — "I don't want to be seen like this by people I really care about!" (If you cared more about you to begin with, you might not have wanted to see yourself like that at any cost. We're not judging, just saying that you should keep yourself at the top of that list of people you care about and don't want to hurt or make to feel ashamed of you.) Then you discovered that fast money can be as addictive as dope. The two main characteristics of addiction are obsession and compulsion — obsession: you can't stop thinking about it; compulsion: you can't stop yourself from doing it. You were chill for a few months, and then the obsessive thinking started. Soon enough you were looking for a "pimp" — and finally, it seems, just the sort of mean-spirited, self-serving "boss" pimp you found! In a way that's the most shocking part of your story, that you went looking for ... well, you put it most clearly in the warning you shout out to any and all girls reading your piece: "Love is not being a ninja' hoe!" Somehow the truth about love requiring a surrender to vulnerability got twisted into surrendering to someone who had no true love for you — and if there ever was a definition of bad love, that's it! It's just like you said about pimps, no matter what they say or how they start out: "Those ninjas do not care about you! All they care about ...." From where we witness, the worst part is in the boys-to-men side of it, where they put so-called hoes, runners, rippers, boppers, etc., into a separate category, undeserving of the respect owed a human being, the way slaves were thought of in the Old South, with no human rights — treated like live stock, money on the hoof. It is a sickness, and it dehumanizes the pimp, making him a monster. How many young men say, "I'm not a gorilla-pimp; or, I'm not a monster-pimp!"? Anyone who treats a girl with callous disrespect and tries to excuse it to himself by calling her, or seeing her as, or thinking she is ... any number of those disrespectful words that won't be repeated here — is repeating the sin of those who enslaved his ancestors, beat them, exploited them, killed them, bought and sold them, while telling themselves it was okay because they're just, fill in the blank, and therefore undeserving of the rights or respect (not to mention love) due a human being! Thank you, Lil' Mama, for your story. Stay strong. No compromises with new slavers, the ghetto pimps, who have it all wrong. You are no less for where you've been and what you've done, but making you feel like less is part of their game. And when the community backs them up in that opinion, that's about as sick and sad, unchristian and inhuman, as it gets. Keep your head up, and don't give up on yourself, no matter how hard times get — stay true to yourself (handle yourself with love) and times change. As Jesus said, "Be cunning as a serpent and innocent as a dove." Don't play yourself and no one else can play you.



Everybody can change.
If I could do it, you can!

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Speaking My Mind

What's up wit it Beat. It's Conflict from Hayward. Well I still haven't gotten an interview for a group home yet and I've been here for about five months now. I have a strong feeling that I'll be here for Christmas. It's messed up but I deserve it. I did the crime so I have to do the time.

I talked to my step-dad two days ago, he said my old ex-girlfriend had a baby just one week ago. It's crazy but I still love her. I wish it was my baby. Her baby daddy don't want nothing to do with the baby. My baby mama don't want nothing to do with me anymore. It's messed up but it happens, oh well. I was thinking that whenever I go, when I get out I will go see my ex and tell her I want to be in the baby's and her life. Her name is Rachel. She's beautiful and I will always love her. I know she feels the same way.

I've seen a lot of people shot and killed so I need to change. That way it aint me in the dirt six feet deep, with my mom crying over my grave.

Change. Change is good for all of us but it's gonna take some time.

-Conflict, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Anything that takes some time and work should be cherished. Because it took some time and hard work to get it. You're right when you say that it's on you. We're not love experts but if that's what you want and feel you need, then again it's up to you. Just know the exact circumstances you're stepping into. Does your baby mama not want you in your child's life? If you've changed your ways, do you think she'll allow you to be a part of that precious child's life? We can't really take care of others when we're not taking care of ourselves.

No Longer

You were my role model
You were my hero
You were anything but a zero
But I hated the way you reprimanded
That's one thing I could not stand
No matter how mom took a stand
I guess you had to prove you were a man

I was so small, I did not know
That what you did was wrong
But it did not last for long
Because soon you were gone
Up in Heaven, two months before I turned seven
You were my role model
You were my hero
But now I see you
Little more than a zero

(Dedicated to Robert Temmallo, my father...died 2000)

-Kyle, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Your poem expresses very strong feelings about your father. When we are born, we don't have the luxury of picking our parents. If you could pick both your mother and father what kind of people would they be? Would they be the same parents you have now or would they be different versions of them?

A lot of people say I'll be in prison in less than a year. Few say they believe that I will succeed in life, but in the end it all comes down to me

No One Knows

No one knows what to name
the fear, the fear
that lies in the darkness.
It's so powerful it needs a friend
so it can be shared.
Even if you're a slave who praises it
to make it go away,
the fear stays in the darkness.
You still won't know how
to name your fear.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Wow, what a poetic piece you deliver on fear. What do you name your fear, since we all have fear, where does you fear come from? What are you fearing? We can only guess. Thank you for stepping up and sharing your pains, concerns and loves with us readers these past months.

I have to make it right. I got to change for me not for anyone else. I've been told all my life I was going to end up in a state prison, but only I can change that and it is for the better.

From My Heart

I've been writing to The Beat for about a year now, and I never wrote about how thankful I am that they give me this opportunity to let my voice be heard.

I been through a lot of things in life and have a lot of experiences to share. I just hope that it won't be through prison poems and writings that I express them.

I get released tomorrow the 12th of December the day before my 18th birthday and I know where my life's been, but I don't know where it's headed.

A lot of people say I'll be in prison in less than a year. Few say they believe that I will succeed in life, but in the end it all comes down to me. As for me I don't know, but something inside me tells me that I'll be in prison because the gangsta life I live, in return gives you nothing but life in a cell and/or death.

I could list off a hundred excuses about how I don't know nothing else...it's my family's fault the reason I live this life...if I had my dad as a child I would not live like this...and some of them might even be true. But that ain't going to get me nothing but a negative mind set worst then I already have. I got dreams of overcoming this struggle I face and giving my daughter Maryjane the life I never had, but I can't do that from a cell.

So on this day December 11th 2005 I will challenge myself to live a better life and I know it will take time and hard work, but I believe someday I'll figure it out. So once again a big thank you to The Beat Within...and a very big thank you to the staff at Durango detention for coming into my life and introducing The Beat to the Gangsta Poet and taking the time out of your day to help me become a better writer. I appreciate the things you did for me and the challenges you always threw my direction. You will always be remembered.

-G Poet, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Thank-you, too, G Poet for all that you have given of yourself to The Beat. It has been a joy to watch you diligently invest your heart and soul into your writings. You have opened your heart and mind to the world and stretched your wings...you certainly have! In turn you invested in yourself and are a richer man because of it. We have so much respect for you. You didn't hesitate to speak your mind when the occasion called for it or you disagreed with a perspective shared. We really believe you have the inner strength to 'make it'. We can go as far as our dreams will take us. We wish you the best in life and hope and pray that you won't waste your mind on drugs and crime. We will keep you in our prayers, because G Poet, we know you are not invincible, but truly you are redeemable!

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Through The Valley Of Death

My life feels drained
'Cause of all the stuff I seen
I can't cope, losing hope
Up for days high off dope
With no place to go so I creep
Searching for a bite to eat that's cheap
Trying to meet my hunger and provide for my daughter, at the same time
Willing to sell my soul to the devil for a dime
Knowing I'm confused I pursue to live this way
battered and bruised, ducking shots from the AK
I'm a prime target for my enemies
But I still stoke through the valley of shadows of death
Busting back with heated tecs
Moving boulders with hollows that rep flesh
Better get a vest if you try to test
What a bloody mess
Infiltrating your hood and executing your soldiers
Confiscating your goods, running from the rollers
Then I get caught and all the fun stops
Pop pop pop pop pop
or I get shot...then I die
Wondering "Why did I live like this"?
Because I was too hard-headed to change
So think before you act
Or end up in a body bag wishing time can go back
I started at an early age, raised in a dope house in a gang related hood
Watching my relatives bang, wishing for the day when I could
Cops kicking in our door
While mom's at the bar, five years old, hit the floor
Arms spread, legs wide
Pissing on myself because I'm scared they might take my life
Dad shot up dope, then went to prison
Mom drank a lot, then got beat up by the guy she was seeing
Witnessed him jump out the window and stab himself repeatedly
Trying to commit suicide
Right before my eyes 'cause of this I'm victimized
I did not ask for this...this life I was given
Then at age seven my older cousin got me high
Didn't know this then, but now I realize
I was slowly committing suicide
At age six, my four sisters and brother went to live with my tia, that leaves me alone
To deal with the problems on my own
Moving back and forth with my mom
Chilling at big Danny's, hiding from Tom
I remember these things as a child
And you ask why I live so wild?
This shhh is all I know. By age twelve I was rebellious, ditching school to get high
Coming home late night with red eyes
I developed an addiction and a thing for the streets
Then at thirteen years old I stole from my tia's stash
It was only a half of grass but mama beat my ass
And paid her back. Then one day
I had nowhere to stay
'Cause a fight with my brother-in-law.
So I slept in the pool area. Then went to see mom.
She ask my tia if I could come in and she said "No!"
I guess I brought this upon myself.
But how you not gonna let a thirteen year old boy inside the house
When he has no where to go and no one to turn to?
Later she let me in to rest my head
but charged my mom fifty dollars a night and kicked me out in the morning.
That was the beginning of life on the streets
At age fifteen I was house to house by myself, in and out of jail and trying hard drugs
busting slugs, chilling with thugs
because besides my brother
they're the only ones who showed me love
I remember one day I was at a bus stop, thinking where would I sleep
Or what would I eat
Then my homie Happy walked up and said where we gonna go?
Since that day I considered him my second bro
We slept in an abandoned house next to my sister's apartments
He used to sneak food from his crib
To feed me and let me wear his clothes
I did the same for him so we became close
He had my back and I had his
We lived like this since we were kids
I don't blame my family for the stuff that I did
And this poem is not a list of excuses...simply telling you how I grew up
And how I lived since I was a kid

-G Poet, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

***From The Beat:** What a moving picture of a horrific life to survive! We hesitated to put this piece out there because of its graphic nature, but we know that life is real! We've known many young people through the years that have faced the odds you describe. Victimized by their circumstances and their role models, they are driven by inner forces to live life on the edge, barely escaping the jaws of death! How is it that some can come out of this hopeless drama and do something moving with their lives? What is that quality that lifts someone out? Is it "attitude"? Is it luck? Is it "heart"? What do you think? Life can deal us some horrible hands but somehow we press on, the opportunities are there waiting for you. Be open to seek out those that can help you reach for and attain them.*

Touching Her Places She Ain't Wanna Be Touched

touching her places to make her feel lust — touching her places to make her want to bust — touching her places to make her feel you dare — touching her places to try and say you care — touching her places to get some pearl — don't you know she's just a little girl striving for survival in her own lil' world on the track sweatin' out pressin' curl' — grown-ass men messing with her in a car for fifty dollars — thirteen years old — now she' pregnant 'bout to have a little girl that's gon' crush her whole lil' world 'cause she still a prostitute gettin' touched in place she ain't wanna be touched

-County Snack, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** The power of truth in your writing is beautiful and shocking and sad. Not shocking because nobody knows but shocking because you expose to the light of day what everyone wants to hide away. Or they want to disregard this little girl's life by calling her a runner or a ho or a ripper, and it just ain't right. Any man or boy-child who reads this piece, needs to see that the exploitation of a girl (whether or not she looks like a woman that's hot, whether she's lost, confused, greedy, a little or a lot, whether she thinks she loves you or thinks you love her or not) is bad as a shot in the back of a baby's head, 'cause you're killing her soul for your gratification and passing that evil on to the next generation. Stop! Every girl is your sister, your mother, your daughter, your granny — there's no such thing as a ripper if you raise your eyes from her fanny and stop thinking with your zipper. Unconditional respect is what every girl needs and deserves to get. If you can't give it, you don't deserve respect yourself, and you know it every time you look in a mirror. Pimp, you hearin'? Go back and read this poem again if you want to call yourself a man.*

He used to sneak food
from his crib
To feed me
and let me wear his clothes

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Rock Bottom

He was the son of a dope man what he saw was what he learned.
He left school now it's finally his turn
to rob and steal.
Even though, deep in his heart, he knows that God is real.
Mama still tries
to open his eyes .
'Cause the way a man lives is the way a man dies.
His father's doing 25 to life
'cause the love for money cuts like a knife
blinding light.
Now he doesn't know which way to go.
His best friend just died two days ago.
He writes his dad the first letter that he ever wrote
a little note
about how bad his heart was broke.
Before the mail could even reach
his jail cell.
The boy was murdered at a neighborhood hotel.
he made a dope sale.
Just like his pop taught 'em
rock bottom
the only thing I got to say is a cop shot 'em.

-Oscar, Maricopa County, Arizona

***From The Beat:** We don't know if this poem is based on a true story or not, but we're sure a lot of Beat readers could probably relate. It is really hard to make the right choices in life when those around you, including your family, have made the wrong ones. Unfortunately a lot of families are caught in this cycle of crime and pain, but that doesn't have to be your story! Set goals that are challenging, but can be achieved. The steps to change may be many, but you need to take one step at time, especially if you are feeling overwhelmed. What choices are you making that will help you change your life? Take advantage of the opportunities that are given to you to make a positive change in your life, and look for people that can model that change for you. It's hard, but it's not impossible. Great poem!*

Share The Same Fear

Sit, write, stare...'cause I share the same fear everyone else fears.
Some won't admit it.
Some just take the ticket and get with it.
Others sit and stare...
wait for it to come, which is unfair.
Too much valuable time wasted in an empty mind because they fiddle without a care
and don't dare to change what is or isn't there.
Too scared to speak what you think,
afraid of what your peer will think.
You stink, so you spray the scent of unflawlessness
(giving up the perfect part of humanity 'flawness')
which will leave you empty, scared of your peer's mind
instead of what your peer's mind can do to you.

-Manuel, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

***From The Beat:** This is a very well written poem! It's a great challenge to your peers to use their minds rather then just let other people determine what they do. The mind is a very powerful tool, but many people, especially young people are afraid to be different and speak up against popular opinion. Do everything you can to expand your mind and sharpen it to be a powerful asset in your own life and in your community.*

What Now?

As I sit in my cell
Wondering how my life could be
Not doing time, but spending my time
In the world, full of opportunities
My life, time is running out
What can I do, where can I go?
School, what's school?
I need an education
My life is upside down
How do I turn it right side up?
What can I do, where can I go?
School is my next choice
Where do I go?
I sunk deeper in the hole
Now can I get out?
My life is full of despair
I wanna do right
How did I go wrong?
I was failing school
Conflicts with the ladies
That girl said this
So I stepped up, what now?
Now I wonder
That shouldn't have been me
You ain't worth it
I got more to my life, than a fight
I want a better life
To stand up for my rights
What now? School is my choice
My life is my right
You were just a fight
Now I sit in this cell
Wondering where my life could be
Doing something in my life
Get my g.e.d
That's right, what now?

-Samantha, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

***From The Beat:** Once you get your G.E.D or high school diploma, you might be able to see what you want to do with your life. With that achievement in your favor, you will find there are more opportunities and options available to you. We applaud your motivation and encourage you to use education (school) as a stepping stone to move you closer to where you want to be. Education can open many doors and will get you respect. "The willingness to accept responsibility for your own life is the source from which self-respect springs."-Joan Didran. Knowledge will set you free and open doors.*

now that we see life as nothing
what we got to live for?

Keep Your Head Up

We were born in a storm trap
living homeless
stealing cars to keep warm
running up on fools
pulling out the straps and taking their jewels
living this gangsta life that we love
praying to the Creator up above
that we live to see sun down,
losing hope each day
as we face this struggle
trying to keep our head up
as our future gets more blurry every day
now that we see life as nothing
what we got to live for?
everything that gots to do with life and overcoming the struggle.

-G Poet, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

***From The Beat:** Is the criminal life and life in a gang only based on survival or is this lifestyle a personal response to unfair or hopeless circumstances? Is there any other way to live when faced with unspeakable odds? What is that inner strength you possess to keep going and to believe that there can be more to life? What does it mean to overcome? What can you do to overcome rather than being overcome by the struggle that you face? Every lifestyle has consequences, both positive and negative, and we choose what type of life we will lead. It may be a struggle but everything we do, both positive and negative is a struggle.... Wewonder what lifestyle and struggles you will continue to choose....positive or negative?*

Today I Want To Remember...

As far back as I can remember my life has been screwed up. I don't really know when it started, but I was small, really small.

My older brother was in prison, most of the time. So I guess that every time my brother came out, I wanted to be with him, and do what he did. There was a reason – girls all the time, getting high with the homies, going out at night. That seemed cool. But the next thing you know, I was locked up in juvy, for small things – stealing, violation of probation, etc.

I didn't realize that little by little things were getting worse. But the judge, I think he liked me. He gave me a lot of chances to go home. But after a while he got tired of me and he sent me away for nineteen months.

I came back and was sent to a group home. I stole the van from the group home. It was a good van. It got me from Fresno all the way to San Diego, and from there, up to King City, and finally to my parent's house in Watsonville, CA. It was a pretty good ride for me, I thought. But the cops were looking for me by now, so I left the van. And then, after a while, I got myself a girlfriend. And yes, I had a good time with her.

One day my girl calls and tells me she wanted to talk with me and that it was important. So I went to her house. She told me she was pregnant, that she was going to have a baby. And for a minute I thought, damn, I'm going to be a daddy. So what I did was – I stopped hanging around with the same friends. I left that crap.

A week passed and I decided to go hang out with some of the old homies that I know, but we got locked up, and this time it was for a serious charge. And to this day, nine months later, I am thinking, why was I looking for a good time when I had it at my house, with my girl?

Now I am facing a long sentence and I don't know when I'll get out. My little girl was born last month and I am thinking – this is not happening to me. But it is, and all I can do is visit my little girl, for thirty minutes a week. It doesn't feel right. But thirty minutes is better than not seeing her at all. But I don't trip. I will be out one day, and I hope she understands her crazy daddy when she gets a little bigger. But I may miss the best time of her life.

So, think about it before you leave your house to have fun.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is a very sad story. There are no winners here. Everyone gets hurt. We hope that many people read your piece and think twice or three times about their actions. And we hope you will continue to write. They say the pen is mightier than the sword. You can prove them right by trying to make sense of your life with words. And whatever time you may have to do could provide an opportunity for you to educate yourself, so that when you are released, you'll be ready for the life you deserve. And ready to be the daddy you want to be.

I'm going to be a daddy. So what I did was – I stopped hanging around with the same friends. I left that crap.

Tried As An Adult (Part 5)

So now it's time for court. Myself and the other inmate they call stand up and do a quick stretch. I fix my pants real quick and head for the door. The other inmate walks behind me. When we get to the door I look out toward the red line by the wall. I could see that they had pulled out other inmates from county jail and they were all lined up on the red line. I look to see if there is a familiar face in the line as I walk to take my place in it. I see a homie from the set and I go line up by him. The other guy I was with lines up in front of me. I turn my head to look at my homie and say: Q-Vole carnal. He greets me back and we both look toward the sheriff.

The sheriff says: "Listen up!"

Then he says: "We are going to Department G. You are to walk in and take a seat. There will be no communicating with the audience. If I see any of you communicating with the audience you will be brought down here and locked up. You will also be called last for court. Also, the person you were talking to will be detained and will be brought down here with you, and that person will hate you for the rest of your life. You are to talk only with your attorney, the bailiff, or the judge. Is that clear?"

I hear a couple of "yes sirs" in the line. Then he says: "Let's have a good day in court, gentlemen."

He waves his arms to get us to start walking. My homie and I are in the middle of the line. The line starts to move in the direction of where we first entered the tombs. But instead of making a left at the door – to the concrete hall we first entered, we make a right into a door across from the entrance. We walk in and make a sharp right again. And there are stairs that rise high, about two stories.

The line starts up the stairs, but we are going slow because we all have handcuffs on, and shackles. As we make our way up the stairs, the guy at the front is told to stop at the top. The line stops and we all move to the left side of the stairs. Then the sheriff walks up the stairs to the door at the top. He opens a door and pushes a red button on the wall which warns the POs, judges and people who work there to clear the hallways because there are inmates coming through. After that he says: "Come on and line up by the wall."

The line starts to move and we start walking up the steps toward the door. As soon as we get to the door, we step through and make a right and see inmates lined up by a wall. I walk and take a left into another hall and get in line. We wait until everyone has come up and is in line. As soon as we're ready and all the sheriffs are there, they say "let's go" and direct us down the hall.

We walk down that hall and are told to make a left down another hall. So we turn and walk down that hall. As we get to the end we are told to make a left into Department G. The leader of the line turns in. I can feel myself getting light headed. I waited patiently for this court date to come, and now the time is here... (to be continued)

-Jesse aka Lil' Huero, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You've done it again. Your attention to detail and your recall of this episode is amazing. It's fascinating and excruciating to read. It gives us chills to follow you step by step through this process. Excellent job. We're waiting for the final installment of this six part series.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Deaf in My Eyes

I can't sleep at night
Because all I see is the deaf in my eyes
I can't even walk outside
Because all I see is the deaf in my eyes
I can't even go for a ride
Because all I see is the deaf in my eyes
I can't even have my girl by my side
Because all I see is the deaf in my eyes
Now as I'm livin' life
I no longer see the deaf in my eyes

-Big-D, Donshay, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: WOW! What a unique piece of writing. I love how you expressed your feelings using and mixing two senses – sight and sound. Very intriguing! I pose a challenge to the readers of this poem – what does the author mean by saying "All I see is deaf I my eyes"?

Life

You carry a knife 'cause you don't know how to talk
You carry a gun 'cause you don't trust your own shadow
You drink a beer to ease the pain
But at the end it's all the same
You were born with no name
But now you're known with lots of fame
You never knew your mom or dad
But no matter what you still are glad
Nothings nice, but nothings bad
Forget a Benz and screrw a Rollie
Life is what you make it homie
You don't need to be rich with honey
Full of sweetness, full of love
Flyin' higher than a dove
Without any bud, no need for drugs
No need for guns
Live life full of love

-Brayan SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Your message is great – Live life full of love. We think that sometimes we forget that we need to make the most of life by living each day that we are given spreading and receiving happiness and love. We're pretty sure that carrying and using guns, spending time getting high, being a part of threatening and violent activities isn't what life is supposed to be about. Why waste the days that we are given making a negative impact on society? As you so intelligently said, life should be full of sweetness and love.

no need for drugs
No need for guns
Live life full of love

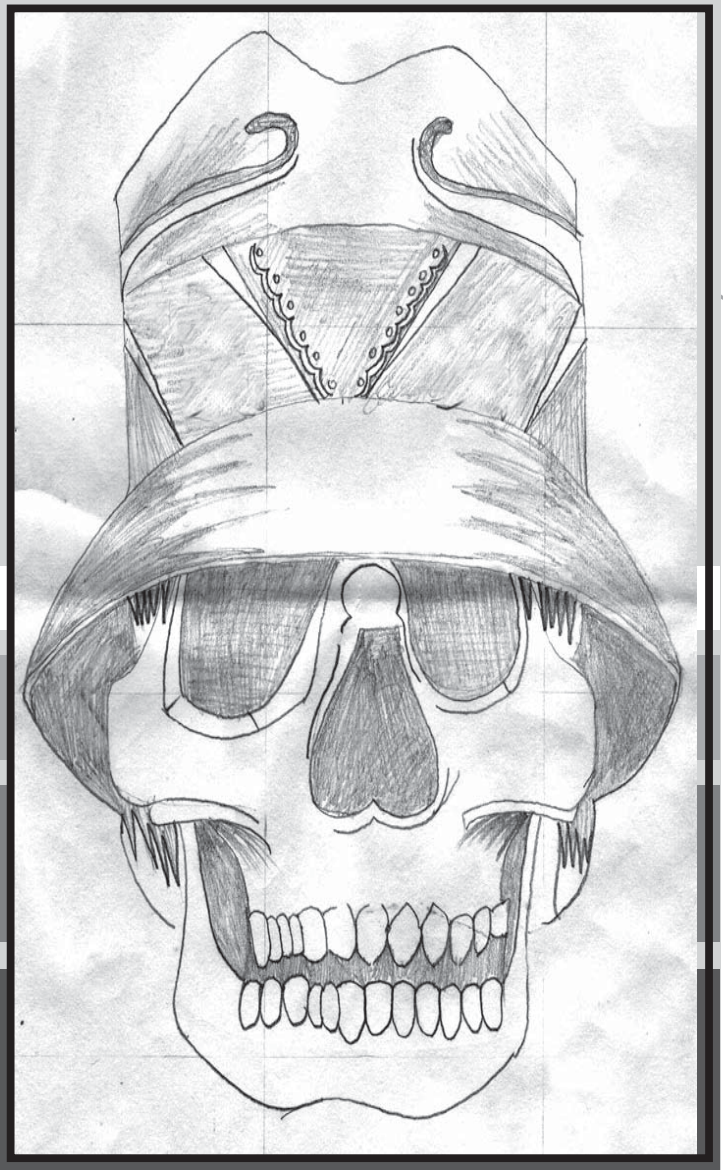
In The Hall

Being in the Hall has taught me a lot about myself. Many things that I do are not acceptable. I learned that self-discipline is key in this world.

People can't go around being angry all the time because they tend to take their anger out on others around them. Controlling a temper can keep trouble at a distance and keep the people around you safe. Being angry gets you nowhere in life. The Hall has taught me to look past all the drama and continue to be me.

-T-mo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You don't use many words but what you do write is for sure — thoughtful, wise and true! Now that you know what to do, it's time to follow through. Not just in here but on the outs, too! Major props, very coo'. You thank the Hall but we're thanking you.



Sometimes

Sometimes I wonder what life's about
Sometimes I wonder why the lights are out
Sometimes I wonder what the lies are about
Sometimes I've seen things I shouldn't have seen
Sometimes I wonder why I'm stuck in the hood and dressed like a fiend
Sometimes I look at what I've become and cry
Sometimes I get crazy and I'm ready to die
Sometimes a man that's your friend may have did it
Sometimes even with sweet if you ain't with it
Sometimes the pain is too much to bear
Sometimes it rains too much to care
Sometimes the sun shines around the clock yet
Sometimes it doesn't
Life's hard.....

-Oscar, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: We all make choices that determine the type of life we will live. Are you satisfied with the life you are living? If not, what would your life need to look like in order for you to be satisfied? You are right about life being hard. There are a lot of things in life that we have no control over, like what family we're born into or what neighborhood we live in, but there are a lot of things that you CAN control and CAN change. You have a purpose for your life that goes beyond the street life of drugs, crimes and gangs. Challenge yourself to find that purpose, and you could be an example for those around you that it is possible to overcome and succeed despite the challenges all around you.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Dear Dad (RIP)

what's up wit' it dad
i know you above
every night i look up
at the stars and
i'm searching for you
i need you daddy
i really do
it's sad to think of how you passed
remember my last words
i love you dad
man that stuff ain't right
i know fo' sure
you made it to the light
man ain't it sad
how they' buildin' more prisons
than schools dad
there's no light in that
just three months ago
was my birthday dad
man i miss
all the excitement and joy we had
man that's messed up
that you gone
but all i can do is cheer you on
rest in peace daddy

-Mia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: From your mouth to God's ear, and from God, straight to your daddy dear — he hears every word of this poem. And even though he knows your heart broke, he feels hope in these words you wrote. And when you look at the stars after the passing of the day, he wants you to know his love is not that far away. Yeah, his soul is up in heaven, but like God's love, his love for you keeps spreading across the sky and across the earth. It's as large as the universe and as small as a seed in your heart, a seed of hope and deepest belief that you will succeed in healing as well as dealing with this lonely world, 'cause enveloped in his love — you're still your daddy's girl.

Man, I had everything with her money in my pocket, food on my plate, a roof over my head, transportation — you name it, I had.

You Blew It

I have blown it in many situations — situations that have no reason to be blown. My grandmother is one of my biggest mistakes I've blown out of proportion and taken for granted. Man, I had everything with her money in my pocket, food on my plate, a roof over my head, transportation — you name it, I had. I knew she could never say no, so I would question it to the extreme. I would always take her car to get to Santa Clara where my friends stayed at just to get a pill or drank.

Soon that came to an end. She said, "Enough is enough," and had to put her foot down. Damn I feel stupid! Sitting here at Walden has made me think about how much I could have if I would've listened to her structure. She has forgiven me for everything. I messed up, but I still can't find it in my heart to forgive myself just yet.

I wouldn't change everything that happened because if I didn't realize all the shhh I've taken for granted, it would never have been able to be fixed. My grandmother is my world, and I can't wait to make repairs with her.

-Pinky, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We're interested to know exactly what you have in mind when you say you want to repair the damage you've done to your relationship with your grandma. It sounds like she doesn't think the relationship is in need of repair, but if you do, then that's something you must attend to. If you were a grandmother taking care of your own grandchild who acted like you have acted, how would you handle it? What would be the most effective strategy for bringing that child under control?

It Was Me

I remember one dream I had when I was chillin' with my family and all of a sudden there was a person who came with a 45, and started shootin' at me and all I could do is run, so I could get away from my family. He shot me what seemed like 40 times but I was still alive running from him.

Finally I got tired of running and I turned to face him. He tookoff his mask, and it was me.

I just sat there and stared at myself and then I woke up and that was it.

-Young Kraz, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This dream is straight up spooky. Do you ever try and wonder what it meant? Here you are trying to run away from this person trying to kill you, and you're also trying to protect your family and you can't... some people say that paying attention to our dreams can help us figure out what's really happening in our hearts. Do you think that's true? Either way, you gave us the chills, like a young Steven King.

Home Or Hell?

temporarily living within these county walls
hearing the detainees
scream and call
the staff not giving a care at all
treating you and me like dogs
only one phone call
missin' everyone and everything
even a moth
wishing i could just call my mom
go home
and wash it all off
    hearing keys jingling
    knowing that's the single thing
    that can set you free
your mind starts to wander off
asking yourself
"how the hell did i fall off"
the chance was given
took it for granted
    now you're back here
    in this evil plant
you know you're sometimes a bad kid
but what can you say
what can you do
    only the judge can tell you
    a wizard in a cloak
    also known as the judge in the robe
    as he sits on his throne
    deciding on where you should go
    juvenile hall
    c — y — a
    camp sweeney
    back home with your mommy and daddy
    group home
    who knows
    you'll know in two weeks from now
    that's your next court date from now
    because we ain't got bail
so welcome to this place
that we detainees
either know as
home or hell

-Poetess, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a beautiful song, this terrible welcome to juvenile prison aka detention center — missing Christmas and New Year's both this winter. Detained, constrained, in pain, waiting for the judge to explain your fate. Asking yourself, "Will the judge send me home or is it too late?" Feeling depressed and then okay and then depressed again. Never knew how much you need your family and friends. The only question that remains your own to answer: Will you change your ways or keep destroying yourself like cancer?

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

The Hall Helped Me

the hall got me addicted to the books
it's like turnin' your life around for a better look
concentrating so much on what you want to do
but if i wasn't locked up i'd be acting the fool
i'm tired of living my life being so confused
it's like i'm not making it to where i want to be and it's like i'm being used
the hall got me thinking
no time to waste, no time for blinking
living like the titanic boat, i'm drowning and sinking
it's like living a hall life, and it can't be tamed
it's like talking to yourself with a person unnamed
the hall helped me in so many ways
too bad i only got ten minutes so i can't explain

-Nana, 150 Crew

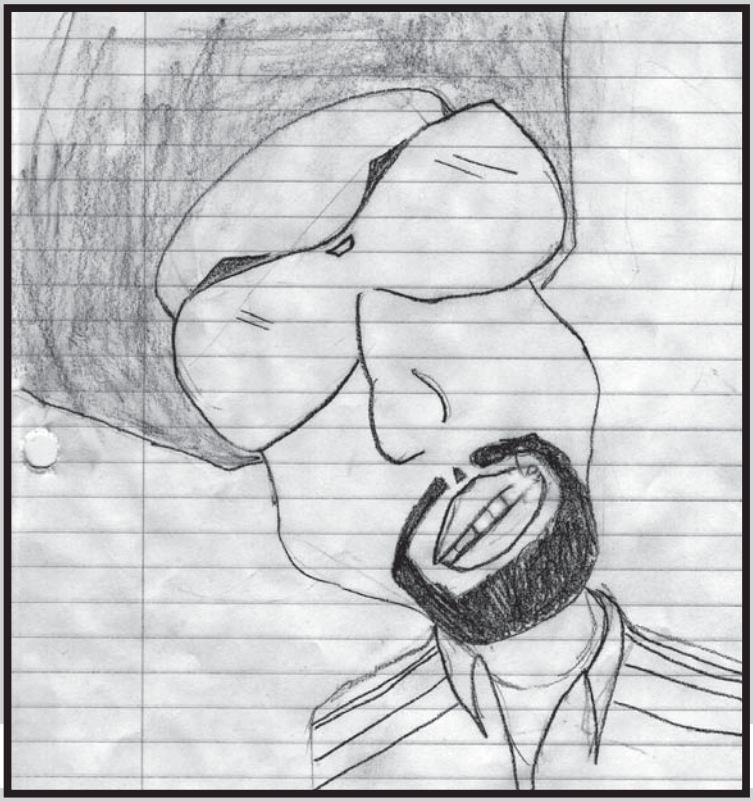
***From The Beat:** Our pages are yours to print your words of truth, facing your feelings and working your way through this dark time of pain and disillusionment — it's like getting sent to hell but finding the walls lined with books of people who tell you both how you got here and how to get free, not by trying to escape (no more running away) but learning to live responsibly day by day, day after day — sometimes hour by hour, even minute by minute, is the only way. No more giving in to acting the fool. No more breaking weak and cutting out from school. No more blaming your mom for what you choose to do. But anyway, write during the week, and we'll print ten pages or more, explaining how you're fighting this war inside your head and your heart and your soul — and how even your time in here is helping you grow whole, with a mind that's clear and a heart that's beginning to heal, 'cause deep in your soul your now know what's real.*

Take A Look At Us

Got a lot of people who ain't afraid to bust
Take a look at us
Taken over by greed and lust
Take a look at us
Unreliable homies, who can you trust
Take a look at us
Where our lifestyle takes us to an early place in da dust
Take a look an' see
I got a lot of homies from youngstas to OG's
Take a look an' see
If you really wanna mess with me
Take a look an' see
At the 'hood, ask if that's where you really wanna be
Take a look an' see if you really wanna be at YGC

-Pinguino Unit 6, SF/YGC

***From The Beat:** We really like this tight little poem, Pinguino. Of course, when you say, "Take a look at us," you're really telling yourself to take a look at you. And, when you look at yourself, what do you see that needs to change? Will you be making those changes? Give us some examples.*



This Time

Being in Juvenile hall this time has made me think about a different way of life. I had to start seeing things different — how they are, not just how I want them to be. I was living in a fantasy world. I had never read the Bible, and since I started doing it, and getting closer to God through praying, I know that there's someone who can see everything.

I can't be doing this to my family. They are the only ones who are always gonna be there for me, no matter what. They gonna help me, protect me, take care of me. They are my only friends! I can trust them, and they don't deserve this from me — making them feel sad and worried. They are hurt, too, 'cause there are no parents that want a son to be in Juvenile Hall! They just want better for me. They teach me everything.

So it's time! This is the time, now! There's no tomorrow — if I wanna change, it has to be now. If I want a better life, I have to start changing. I have to say goodbye to weed. Drugs are just ruining my life! So I have to quit, before it gets too late. I have to start kicking it with the right friends, the ones that I know don't' do drugs, 'cause they can help me stay out of trouble.

I don't want to come back to the hall. Doing drugs and hanging with the wrong friends are not good decisions to make. So it's time for me to say: now! If I don't change now, I won't do it ever. This is it.

-Jose, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** The truth is that the present is the only time in which anyone can change, because the present is all we ever have. We can think about yesterday or tomorrow, but all we really have is right now. So why not start the change right now? Yeah, you can wait till you catch an adult sentence or something, but it won't be easier to change at 27 than it is at 17. Probably it will be harder — plus you will have wasted all that time. Some catch that 25 with an L, and though we still hope they change — it won't preserve their freedom any longer. Have you asked you PO if you can go to a drug rehab' program, because most people need help in learning how to stop and stay stopped and also can use the support of others who realize they have to stop using drugs. Of course, there are AA and NA meetings everywhere on the outs — call the hotline and find a young person's meeting after your release. Get a sponsor and work the steps.*

Truth of Addiction

Guns, drugs, and thugs are all I know
Please show me right from wrong before I go
What I do is wrong but it's all I know
I don't want the scars to show, but it's all I know
Everybody says that I'm my own worst foe
But please forgive, because it's all I know
I must help myself before I go
For guns, drugs and thugs
I don't want to know

-Kyle SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

***From The Beat:** Guns, drugs and thugs... Can you become addicted to this kind of life? Growing up with these things around you can be quite stressful and hurtful. Guns, drugs and thugs are all things that represent destruction and ill will. One of the first things to do when you are addicted to something is to acknowledge that you really do have a problem. The next thing you must do is step away from the addiction. Guns, drugs and thugs don't have a healthy place in anyone's life. Acknowledge and step away...*

What I Took For Granted

I assumed everything was going to be fine, because I hadn't gotten locked up for a while. So I had everything all good, but I took it for granted. I thought I wasn't going to get locked up any more. And then it just happened, and I lost everything I'd worked for. But I plan to get it back by tripping about only my own stuff and not worrying about anybody else's.

-Big D, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Things don't "just happen". Somewhere along the line you made at least one bad decision. Figuring out why you tend to make those decisions will go a long way toward getting you where you really want to be.

Hell

The worst place drugs have taken me is losing friends, losing brain cells, to losing my freedom. I lost a good friend who used a lot of crystal. I lost brain cells, I know it, but I don't feel it, and I lost a lot of freedom being in here. I hate drugs, but I just won't leave them alone! She (crystal) brought me stress, anger, revenge, and pain! So if you are ever thinkin' 'bout doing drugs, then good luck. Tell the devil I said, "Hi," and that I don't miss his evil ways, as he welcomes you to hell.

-Melissa, Marin

From The Beat: You don't say anything good about what drugs have done to or for you, Melissa, so what is their huge hold on you? Now that your mind is clear because you have no access to them in juvy, can you figure out exactly what it is about them that gets to you when you're free and vulnerable? How can you get into something else that you feel passionate about, so you can forget about drugs when you're free again? You're right that drugs can hurt your brain cells. When your friends use drugs, does that make it harder for you to not use them, too? If so, do you need to make a choice about what and who to choose?

A Lil' Piece Of Me

All my life I was told, "You need help, Sweety." At first it scared me, but by the time I was nine years old, I could say, "Aww, so sweet it makes my crank teeth hurt."

As I grew older I got sucked further and further into so-called addiction. My drug use was my excuse to why nothing was good enough. At thirteen years old, everyone I had turned to for help had only introduced me to another drug of choice. They all said they wanted to help me. I believed them all and refused to believe the people that were truly capable of helping me. That got me to a point were I took more than just insight and knowledge for granted. I took my life for granted. But that's a different story that I will share with you later.

Everybody that had anything to do with the system I considered cops. I did not like cops because of some earlier experiences with cops and the drug task force. I would say to my teachers, counselors, parents and siblings that they would never understand and I wouldn't even waste the breath of tryin' to explain what was inside of me.

To this day, a part of me says, "Bobbi, don't even think twice, they're all out to hurt you". But another tiny part says, "Don't take wisdom for granted. Live, love, laugh."

Who are you? You can't help me. You can't even help yourself. Man, only I can change me!

-Bobbi, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: You're right, of course, that only you can change yourself. But that doesn't mean you can't get help. We all need help in many different areas of our lives, and no one succeeds on his own or her own. Reaching out to righteous people for the help we need is one sign that we've left childhood behind and recognize how we, as adults, are all dependent on each other. We are quite sure that among those people you listed, from teachers to siblings, there are those who truly do have your best interests at heat.

Growin' Up, I Was Messin' Up

Growin' up
I was messin' up
Then I had started poppin' pills
When I lost my dad
My ninjas would have said
My life was bad
They was right
I was in pain
Now nothin' but coldness
Runs through my veins
Doin' dumb stuff
Breakin' the law
My way of gettin' paid
Breakin' in cars
Now the only thang I'm breakin'
Is tears
Behind brick walls.

-Mac, Marin

From The Beat: We're sorry about you losing your dad, Mac, but you can't let that threaten your freedom and your future. You sound like you're still messing up. You'll need all the strength you can find, now that you're more on your own, and sabotaging your life by breaking laws will only make it worse. You're grieving and probably very scared of life on your own. Who can you go to for some fun, affection and help? Don't hesitate to ask for it!

Island

Sometimes I close my eyes and think that I'm on an island. I'm at the edge of a cliff and my hair is waving in the wind. My lips can taste fresh water. But there is a problem. There's no map to get me to this island, and no plan. It's all in my imagination.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Sometimes, Uriel, we are forced by circumstances to live in our imaginations. One of America's greatest poets lived much of her life in her bedroom. She would stand at the window and think. She wrote great poems. Her room was her island and her imagination was "wider than the sky". If you continue to work at your reading and your writing, it isn't difficult for us to imagine that one day you'll be making wonderful poems. You're well on the way.

Blowin' In The Wind

I have a huge burden on my shoulders.
All I see is darkness in my future.
I know where I'm going, but still fear it.
I'm powerless over what happens,
like a slave going where he's sent.
But what can I do besides go with the flow,
like blowin' in the wind.

-Big D, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: When you like the flow, go with it. But you aren't a slave. And while you've lost power over your immediate future, you must remember that you are a young man. You may have to wait, and wait longer than you'd like. But you'll get another chance. When you get that chance, be ready. Be prepared.

Circumstances

These circumstances got me trippin'.
I was hoping for another chance,
but instead they threw me in the fire.
The flame is burning my flesh.
Soon, nothing but ashes left –
no future,
nothing but darkness and agony.

-D, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: That's the beauty of writing. You can burn on the page so you don't have to burn for real. Writing allows you to work things out, on paper - like anger, sadness, rage, disappointment – so that when you have to deal with them for real, they've spent a bit of their energy and will be easier to bear.

Chances Are

When you live life in the darkness
it's like flipping a coin.
Chances are you'll have many burdens.
You'll cross the wrong boundaries.
You'll dance the wrong dance.
Crows will eat your bones.
You'll turn to ashes and be blown to dust.

-Anonymous, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is grim, but well done, very well done.

On Top

Last night God saved me.
I had the worst PO, an adult PO,
because I'm being tried as an adult.
But one of the best PO's came and took my case and is offering probation,
instead of YA for eight years. And now I say, "Forget that block.
I'm steppin' it up and doing a different thing-a new life.
Thank you, God."

-Henry, Marin

From The Beat: You seem to have many talents and skills you can work into a career, a life, Henry. You're good at sports, you're very observant, smart, and independent. You always write right out of your heart. We hope you take your time in juvy to think through what you can develop, to keep your resolution to change your life and stay free.

Ashes To Ashes

On the boundary, between the dead and the living,
blessing the ashes that once were alive
you enter the darkness. You enter
The Lord Father's door, to ask for forgiveness
so you won't get burned.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Good writing Uriel. Your writing gets better and better. Keep it up.

I Have Always Wanted To Learn About

I want to learn about a lot of things. The main things I want to learn is mechanics. I am good with my hands and I love learning how things work.

My brother-in-law in a mechanic. I'm go work with him when I can, and I have a good time doing it. I go to work with him when I can. The last time I went I was15 years old. That was two years ago. When I get out I am going to go back and learn all I can, and when I can't learn no more, I am going to open my own garage.

-Chava Unit 6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're lucky to have both an interest and talent with mechanics, and also a way of putting that talent to good use. Now, all you have to do is stop doing whatever it is that results in the loss of your freedom, and keep your promise to work with your brother-in-law when you get out. Good luck.

Tired of Being Here

Man, I don't even know about these topics this week! But I know I'm tired of being in this ol' bootsy-ash Hall! But it's good, 'cause I'm a boss, and I can handle whatever comes my way. I just have to make the best out of this situation — don't let this adversity break me! It can only make me stronger that what I am.

I have been to the Hall hell of times, but all the other times didn't matter — 'cause I didn't want to do better. I didn't want to change my life. This time, I want to do all that! I want to make a difference. I want to make something of my life, and I know only I can do it. It's me and nobody else that's going to get me to where I'm tryin'a go. I might get a little help, but that's about it — it's up to me!

And I know life is too short to be bullshipping, to be playing all the time. I been b-s-ing! I could've started on my project, but instead I keep playing around and it hasn't gotten me anywhere — nothing positive, all negative. I got to get myself together.

-Night, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know, we're not supposed to put the last names of juveniles in our public 'zine, in case you want to close your record someday perhaps — so we picked a name for you. Hope it's okay. But if you follow through on what you write here, you will be putting trouble behind you, and there's no reason one day in the future, when you're applying for a job and they ask if you have a record, you can honestly say: My record is clear. But you do need to get yourself together, and you have to give it a no-matter-what effort. If things go well or if they get harder for a while, you're going to get yourself together — no matter what!

Role Playing

As I stand on this stage actin' out this scene. I stand confused, hoping to be able to find my place. I should have not opened that bottle and taken that drink. Smoked that blunt and popped that pill. Now I stand upon this crowd trying to remember my next line. As I start from scratch remembering from the beginning, hoping to refresh the thought.

Nothing comes so I just improvise and act upon my own instinct. Hoping to be able to entertain the watching. So as I play the role and wait for the next scene. The crowd seems pleased, and fully interested in the drama that is acted out. Is this a true story or just another fairytale made up to entrance the viewing, for when the last scene comes what shall I do.

As I get tired of making it up as I go. I hope to fall back on to the correct place of the script. Or do I? Now I have the chance to make my own ending. Let's hope I make a good one, because the finale has now come.

-Andrew, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice piece of writing. Life is like a play at times and yes we do have to improvise. If we know what the play is about and the message we want to get across to the audience, then improvising is a bit easier. Now is your chance to make that spectacular ending. What will you do? Sometimes it's not about entertaining, it's about sticking to the script and believing in your work. We all love a good play and hope the ending/beginning fits the story line. Look forward to hearing it play out.

New Year

I want to start over because I don't want to go through this Juvenile Hall no more. I want to start being with my family this New Year. I want to go get a job because I don't want to see my family going through too much. I want to just get through probation and just stay out of trouble, because this year I'm going through so much.

I just heard that my cousin got killed on Monday December 11, 2006. I'm going through too much because I just lost everybody that I care for. The only person good is my big brother. He's still with me. But I'm hella mad at this year because I lost all my best friends.

I want this New Year to go good. I want me and my brother to just go live out of Oakland. Go to a new city or state. RIP to all my lost friends and my cousin. I'll see ya soon. From your lil' brother.

-Sammy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear that you've went through so much pain and loss this past year. They say everything happens for a reason and you've got to believe that. We hope that this motivates you and your brother in the right way. Be there for each other and support each other in making the right decisions. You already know where the wrong ones will lead you. Where's your family at in all this? Are they not supportive of you two? It's good to have that support, especially from those you love and trust.

Change My Life In The Hall

When I went back in the Hall, I already knew it was gonna happen to me. But what I didn't know is dat da Hall would help me in a lot of different ways to change my life.

I wish I could go out there in my streets and go to school and get good grades and credits, but I can't — because I'm here in da Hall and I'll be here for four months straight! It ain't no joking! I just wish I could get out sooner, but I hope I get out sooner or later 'cause this Hall ain't no support to me in no way! I support myself.

No one else wants my support because they think I'm a bad kid around here, but I'm really not. I'm a good kid. And I'm responsible for my own destiny. That's why I'm hoping that I get out soon, so I can get along with my life. I've been doing a lot of thinking about my life and my family, and even my girl — thinking she'll probably start to look for another guy. I lost my everything! I lost what I've always wanted! It ain't gonna happen.

But I'm fighting for my life and I gotta be good. I got to be ready to go out in the real world and do good. I've learned one thing in here for sure — respect! I respect all the solid females around here. I miss my family though and the girls on the outs, no joking!

-Dizzy Dwan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Actually your name tells us something about your problem with "doing good" — distinguishing right from wrong or wise from foolish and acting accordingly. You get "dizzy" and lose your balance, can't tell up from down, and nothing stands still long enough to get a good fix on it. How can you hold steady to your aim, your goal, when you're "dizzy"? So, Dizzy Dwan, how you gonna keep your balance? Slow your roll, for one. Fill your time with productive and positive activities. Ever heard the saying, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop." It means, keep yourself busy with doing good things or the devil sneak into your mind and put you to work for him — and "the wages of sin" are death ... and incarceration. So, give it some thought and tell us: What's your plan when you hit the streets? How will you be spending your time?

My Stage On This Page

my stage on this page
— this i can't face
with my heart racin' at a slow pace
me doing what i did to get i jail
this is what i have to face
my holidays in the hall
this is not the number i wanted to call
this stage i'm on
i'm standing here alone
on my throne
i'm embarrassed
why am i up here
my nervous system is coming
it's flowing up
i feel stuck
something is about to erupt
i'm really stressed
on the verge of depressed
on these thought that run through my mind
as i sit here on stage
reading from this page
reading it to you
i'm thoughtless

-Tabatha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: From where we sit, witnesses and audience to you poetic output in our pages, the claim that you're thoughtless, sounds plain outrageous. You always have so much to say, and say it in such an elegant way, we can hardly believe you'll be stuck (here) for long. The force of mind is too strong. There is no quick fix, it's true. But in the long run, we know you'll come through. Maybe you acted thoughtlessly in the past, and that's what brought you here at last — but now that you know, you'll never act as thoughtlessly as before. Make this new year stage one of three act play that's only just begun. You're still young, there's so much more for you to see and do under the sun.

The Hall Changed Me

What's up, Beat! As for me, nothin' — same ol' shhh. Well, I mean, the Hall will change you, if you know what it will lead to. If you go to the Hall once, you should not go back. But some people do not care, and they do stuff anyway to go back.

The Hall will change you, but I cannot say that for everybody 'cause some people do not understand. So, for me, that shhh will change me, 'cause that's not a place you would want to do when you could be somewhere else where you can do what you want to.

If you are in there, you can't do nothin' but what they tell you to do. You have to be around ninjas all the time. You be getting mad when you see the same faces all day, every day, and then you have to take a shower with the same faces.

-Lil' Dre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: While you still feel like this, is definitely the time to make a change in your life on the outs, because those who keep coming back get so used to all the stuff you just listed that they almost don't mind being locked up. I mean, nobody really likes it, but it gets familiar, almost like that's who they are — and you do not want that happening to you because you know where that leads to: a life of incarceration. Here at Camp you get home visits where you can practice living a new way, or like most here, you can go back to the same old play thinking you're getting away with it — then, one day, maybe after you're released, it comes back to bite you! And you're back in the Hall. No, that isn't you, Lil' Dre. It all depends on what you do, not just what you say.

Living In These Streets

(RIP Blade; Blade Said What Up)
living in these streets dog it ain't no joke
ninjas get robbed and killed man over some dope
sometimes i feel like i'm in a fight for my life on the ropes
struggling to maintain my walk without no hope
and when my cousin died it only made things worse
skipping school going to jail ended up dead in a hearse
it's what the fam' said would happen if i didn't go to church
or see god in my life instead of making god hurt
i need to stop acing up and go to school and all
because i know how it is for a single-parent mom
going to work coming home buying food and all
bad enough watching kids that don't listen at all
sometimes i think to myself why my cousin is gone
or why he died so quick and not a tad too long
that's why i'm sitting here now writing this poem
reminiscing about the past as it comes from the soul

-Atlanta, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's hard to see when someone close to you is taken to the cemetery, especially family, that the best hope lies buried in your heart ... to stop the chain of calamities! Do it for your God, do it for your mom! Do it for your RIP cousin Blade, who's spirit in an all-merciful heaven looks down on you and prays that you don't make the same mistakes and end up the same way. As far as feeling like your "on the ropes" — ever hear of Muhammed Ali's "rope a dope"? He used the ropes to absorb the bone-crushing blows being delivered by George Foreman. It looked hopeless! Then, unharmed because he was leaning back into the ropes with each blow and taking away their power, when the time was right, he came out suddenly to fight — and the man on the ropes proved himself to be still a champion that night!

Locked Up

I think Juvenile hall has made me stronger and smarter because when I was free, I didn't really think about the consequences behind the things I did. Since I came here, I figured out to think twice and very hard about the outcome of something before I do it. I also became stronger in Juvenile Hall because I learned that you can't always get out of everything so you have to just deal with it.

-Lil' Kj, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you're turning a negative situation into a positive, learning experience—we wish all of the young people in your position could do the same. Do you think you'll be able to take your new knowledge with you when you get back out to your real life? It's hard to do, but we think you're smart enough.

This Is Me

I been through it enough
goin' to the hall don't make you buff
it just make you think about what you did
yo' crimes and stuff
it keeps you and the free world in a range and
get you heated when you get detained and
being on probation will make most youngstas change.
It make most of you activities be on provoke and
they'll bring you back if you smoke so
be cool and don't think it's a joke
it ain't no game
I suggest you just change up and
quit tryna gain respect for your name unless you a pup
'cause you just gone keep fillin' a cup and
you better quit pourin' more on you life 'fore you stay
locked up
wake yo' game up and get outta sleep mode and
'bout the dream,
like I told you,
build up self-esteem 'cause this bootsy stuff is getting old.

-Cheeck, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow! This is a piece with so much going for it we don't even know where to start. First of all, the message you're giving is a powerful wake-up call to your peers and we hope they're all reading close. Second, you write with real lyricism and we can see that you have talent, not to mention smarts. Have you ever thought about getting into spoken word? Have you ever heard of the organization Youth Speaks? You should do something with all of the things you have to say—and keep it coming this way too, The Beat is proud to print your words.

I Stop and Think About

the hall, man, i never read so much
or missed a simple kiss or touch
they feed us one, two, three times a day
most of the time we still hungry
we really earn credits quick and fast though
inside at a school containing rippers and hoes
but in all reality
this is a good temporary
place to be
because we get to stop and think about
all the dumb stuff we do when we out
and the choice to grow up and get mature
is all on us — we know that for sure

-Sassy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So many who keep coming back here continue to think "grown up" means they're now free to drug and drink, 'cause no one can tell a grown up what to do — so being grown up means living with no rules. But now you see that's just not true. Being grown up means the rules are up to you to see for yourself and choose to do — or not. But if you don't choose well, you condemn yourself to a visit in hell until you're ready to stop, pick yourself up, and see that acting grown means you have to make good decisions on your own (and that goes for whether you again live in your family's home or from now on have to figure out how to make it alone — either way you need to be mature enough to see there are rules you need to follow if you want to be free, 'cause that's what being grown up means).

You Blew It

I blew my scholarship in sports, because I got caught up in something stupid. I did something I should never have done, because — now look where am at!

I could've been playing for somebody's college football or basketball team. So, you see, I blew that! But now I am getting another chance. So I am going to do better in life now, because I am not going to blow this chance!

So peace out, Beat. This yo' boy, Lil' Sam. God Bless!

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes misfortune turns out to be for the better. For though you're a sadder man for having blown it, you're a wiser man, too. Now you're safe from the foolish thinking of the former you. Remember though, it's not just about getting caught — it's playing it safe by doing what you ought!

My Son Isaac Is My Life

Ever since my son has been born, his birth has transformed my mental and emotional life. I miss my son a lot and can't stop thinking about his mother either.

My son is ten months old now, and I hope I can go to a placement soon so I can be out for my son's first birthday. I love you Esther and Isaac! And I can't wait until I can be with both of you for the rest of my life! Love always and forever, Justin (Will you marry me, Esther?)

-Justin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: First prove you know how to live responsibly and stay free, that's what Esther and your son need to see. Proposing marriage proves your serious intention, but your follow through is what will make the most lasting impression. What are your plans after your release? School? A job? Both? Fail to plan and you plan to fail.

2007

This coming year, 2007, is going to be one of the most important of my life. This is the year I will finish my academic plan to become a Real Estate Agent/Broker.

I am ashamed to have to start the year with a new charge that will probably get me on probation again. But I have made up my mind about my future — and I don't plan to going back and committing crimes. The short time I've spent here has made me realize that I've come a long way — and unlike most in here, I have something going for me on the outside.

Although I am only seventeen, I know I have reached that point this year: the point where I can reflect on my troubled past and start working towards the future I want.

-Raul, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Right on, right on! Don't underestimate the power of habit (might even call it addiction to the street or the game or whatever), but if you stay vigilant, busy, productive, positive and generous (hard to explain why a generous heart helps as much as it does, but that's the way it is) — you have both the opportunity and the ability to claim the future you imagine for yourself selling real estate. Be careful but be courageous, too! It's all on you.

To the People of New Orleans: Keep Yo' Head Up

What up bra-bra! Yeah, I know, y'all was in a lot of water. I hope you can stay on the top of the water till someone get there!

It's dry over here. So you can come swim over here. It's people over here that's from over there. I seen New Orleans exposed, but I'm still Oakland. We up in jail talking about y'all swimming around. We got schools, too — so y'all can come learn, too.

Well, keep it lit wit' y'all. But we seen the news and the movie Katrina. It was messed up that them people got killed like that. But y'all have to keep it lit! If I was a millionaire, I would give y'all some money — but I'm not, and I'm in jail, and I don't got it like that. So, it's ugly right now. But when I do get that money I'm'a send.

So keep fixin' y'all house, 'cause the President ain't helping y'all out. And move away from the water so this won't happen again. Y'all can come go dumb wit' us!

-Kash Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sad to say, as high as the murder rate was last year, New Orleans led the nation in murder, by several different measures. It's a shame that people don't pull together in a crisis, or rather, despite how many do, there are always some out there who care only about themselves and not their communities (or they define their community as their click, nothing more nor less; and everyone else is a potential victim or rival). If poverty breeds violence, then it should come as no surprise that murder rates rise after a natural disaster like that in New Orleans. The solution is to bring some money and some hope, not the National Guard! And don't go dumb, go smart — if you wanna go far!

It Helped, In a Way

Juvenile Hall has helped me in a way, because when I came in here, I was planning on goin' back to the streets and droppin' out of school for good and leavin' my mama' house to go live with my brothers in Oakland.

But I'm tired of coming here, 'cause I been here like six times, and it's like every time I come here, I be here for months, even this time. And I also start having bad relationships with my family. And I don't think it's right for my brothers and sisters to see my like dis. So I'm having second thought' 'bout da street life.

All I wanna do is get off probation and live life as a positive person. And who know'? If I come back, it's possible I could go to the 'Y' because of the position I'm in — or I could go to another group home. So I'm tired of 'em! So, yeah, I'm just gon' try to do right and get through life and be a successful person in life — and make my mom happy for me.

-Cookie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's so good to see and hear you coming back to your senses, and if the long patches of time alone to think while you're in Juvenile Hall have helped, then it's definitely a cloud's silver lining — a blessing born through pain, or, in other words, learning you lesson. We're impressed with your concern for how your behavior and its consequences are adversely affecting your brothers, sisters and your mother, 'cause it sure is adversely affecting you! So, for the sake of everyone you care about in life — it's time to stop doing wrong and start doing right!

New Year, New Me

In the New Year (2007) I plan on being successful. I want to go to a group home, run a good program, and earn my high school diploma. I also want to participate in the independent living program (ILP) and earn the money you can get from the program. The program gives you five thousand dollars when you graduate from the group home!

I also want to get my license and buy a car as soon as I graduate from my group home. I'm also going to get a job while I'm at the group home, so I can graduate with some extra money in my pocket. Ya dig? My ambition is to become a professional singer. I want to get in the studio to lay down some tracks and get my demo's out there to record labels!

After I'm done with the group home, I'm going to college and getting my own place to live. I've got lots of dreams, and I plan on fulfilling each and every one of them. I'm o ut.

-Fresh Prinze, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like a good plan. Why not write a song and sing it for us here in the Hall — the few times it's been done, it's always been appreciated by fellow detainees. But the main thing is that you follow through on this plan, especially getting that schooling under you belt. You know they have recording equipment at college, too. You could take some tech courses, learn how to operate it — and do your thang in college!

Take Freedom For Granted

I be taking my freedom for granted, because every time I get out I be doing the same shhh wit' the same people! There are some times where I just start not giving a what — and start doing what I want to do. I think there are a lot of ninjas that feel like me, and that's why the Town is the way it is.

-Young Black, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The key is realizing that you want to stay free, but that's just a start. Next you have to educate your heart to want to do right — get a job and want to succeed, 'cause that's what will keep you free. And finish your education because you want to. Then when you start to slip, get a grip and do what you really want to do — those things that will keep you free.

Dream

I dream of getting out soon, that freedom is just over the edge. My eyes can barely see it, my fingers can almost feel it. I'm trying to get out of this place, but it feels like I'm trapped on an island, an island that's not on the map.

-Big D, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: A person who makes maps is called a cartographer. Sometimes we have to be our own cartographers. We have to create the maps that will lead us where we want to go. And some journeys are longer than others. Call it what you will, a map, a plan, a dream. You have to have one to get where you want to go. And sometimes you have to be very patient, without giving up hope. So draw that map, Big D.

All On My Own

i'm losin' the battle between good and evil
got me scared all alone in terror
'cause i hate the man in the mirror
i wonder if there's a god in the sky
ef this world it got me feeling like i wanna die
all my hope is gone
they wanna hate 'cause I'm a con'
i'm feeling all alone on my own — learnin'
in my mind feeling it's my time — burnin'
and god showin' me no mercy
the judge acts like i'm'a killa
it got me to the point that i wanna pull the trigga
but i ain't trippin' 'cause what can't kill me only makes me stronger
day by day i know i ain't gon' live longer
haven't really seen the sunlight in so many days
it got me heated up like mace
they don't even give a shhh 'bout my case
i'm a one-man souljah!
i can feel my blood getting colder
they put me with a killa
and they expect me not to be a killa
and in the end i feel like i'm all on my own

-Sohail, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your intelligence bursts from the page and hits your reader between the eyes, but we can't say that you are also wise. Pointless to hate the man in the mirror, 'cause he's the only one guaranteed to hear ya. Forgive the sinner not the sin, and with a little love in your heart for him, let the changes begin on the inside — in your mind, heart and soul — 'cause if you just keep letting yourself become more cold, you'll be surrendering your future to the system whole. The way out is to find a legal way to get your pay, give the police and the judge no chance to lock you away. Maybe God is testing you, but if you make a positive plan and follow through — God will soon be blessing you. You're in a whole and you can keep digging in, or you can climb out and let the changes begin.

God Please Help Me

Help me with with life.
Help me to make things alright.
Help me to see things in a different eyesight.
Help me be able to give and not take.
Help me get my life out of the death rate.
Help the poor, help the needy.
In a way I am poor and needy.
I know this until I am seeing life differently.
I know one day this will come.
Until that day I will be another bum.
A bum without the eyes of Jesus Christ.
A man to make everything right.
God thank you 'cause I know you will.

-Deonta, 150 Crew

From The Beat: God always provides a way for us. It's up to us however which way we choose, because that's how we were created. You're a child of God and not a bum. So please don't think of yourself as one. When you're feeling down speak with those who'll lend an ear, and can give you some positive feedback.

My Life

i take a glance back, boy, i look at my life
i've lived sixteen years and feel like none were lived right
my momma raised me so my game gotta be tight
chillin' with the homies up on the block day 'till night
see living in cali(fornia), foo', that ain't nothing nice
life's a struggle so it's kind of hard to get mines
them suckas don't test me 'cause I'm quick to take flight
hustle hard, get money, put it all on a beezy
i'm dipped in prego, saucy, man, i gets real cheesy
i'm gumbeezy, call hennessy, henn, and a blunt, a bleezie
wish i wasn't locked up, but posted at my heezy
i'm chillin', money on my mind when the block bleeds
mind's filled with greed
so i soak the pain away with henny and lemon squeeze
what it do, what it is, yung gumby popped him a thizz
smoked out, turfed out, but i'm not just some kid
'till the next time y'all come, i'm gonna handle my bizz.

-Lil' Gumby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We admire you ability to rhyme, but we fear the Henn and the blunts and the thizz, have give your mind a bit of a twist — and we're not talking lemon but reserving an early bunk in heaven or hell, or the system just built a SHU (security housing unit) just for you to dwell twenty-three-and-a-half hours a day. That's where what you're calling "greed" leads: bullets flying, homies and rivals dying, for what? So you can drink and drug away the pain. No, Gumby, it's time to change your game. With your brain you could make legal cabbage. Get yourself a job and stop playing the savage. Life's a struggle, yeah, but if you really wanna bubble — go to school and get a career. 'Cause you sound like you're addicted to the street, and that means jail time repeats after each release. Until you quit and go legit, you're living under a curse, and it will just keep getting worse and worse. We're not hatin', just tryin' to awaken your common sense — we're not telling you anything you don't already comprehend. Time to switch from wrong to right and make amends — to your moms, among others, young friend.

That Dance

That dance I did put a heavy burden on me.
Sometimes it felt like I was in darkness
and afraid of the unknown. I felt powerless.
But I sang a new song and a new window
opened for me. The weather cleared,
the wound healed.

-Hugo, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: So, it's time to learn a new dance, a safer dance, a better one.

Choices

Hating my life locked up in jail
Chose to do crime and now I fail
My life was hard on the streets I lived
Now I lost my life, freedom and kid
All because I smoked my meth
Now I'm charged with auto theft
Now I watch my life going down the drain
All because I slung crack cocaine
All just to kick it with friends and homies
I should have did what me mother told me
Go to school get a life follow your dreams
Stay in school, get a life, follow your dreams
Stay off drugs and do what's right
But instead I put up a fight
Now look I'm locked up for good
Shouldn't have listened to the homies in the hood
Well I know when I go back home for good to stay
I'll remember the choices I made that day
Not to do better today this time
Pray to God so I don't do crime

-Lil' Chick, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Now that you know what the consequences are and you know what it feels like to not be there for your child, maybe that will help you make the right decisions in life. You seem like a bright person that can really accomplish something in life, so do what you know is right. Remember the feelings you had while "locked up" knowing your child was out there without you. Life does make the time for us to reflect...use this time wisely

Real Talk

To me the Hall has taught me a lot about what I need to do to stay out. Since I been in the Hall, I have been thinking about my girl and what she was doin'. I also was thinking about my own family and hoping they was doing okay now that I lost my dad.

So what I'm trying to say is that since I've been in the Hall, I have been doing some thinking — thinking about what I am going to do to stay out, 'cause doing time is something that I never wanted to do. The Hall has told me what I need to do before I get locked up for good — and that's change!

Lastly, to all you out there, change before it's too late. Peace.

-Young Fred, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You got it right, that the real ones face reality and know when it's time to change. Everybody knows or should, that you can't stay in the game for good. Maybe as a youngster it kinda, sorta worked, but here on out, the consequences just keep getting worse. But now, tell us, what specifically do you plan to change? Fail to plan and you plan to fail.

Same Dream Over And Over

What's up Beat? It's kinda weird you guys asked me about my dreams. I keep on having the same dream over and over. It starts out with me overlooking Cuba, or some tropical city. I'm about 27 and my dreads are to my back. I have this girl in my room, some beautiful long haired, thick Brazilian.

Then some dudes come in. Apparently I am a mob boss and I have a whole organized crime syndicate (which happens to be what I want in life, sort of). My dad is out of the pen. My mom is happy living in a mansion, and all my loved ones are happy.

But I kill for a living. I sell boats of drugs. I have war with the mafia. I am greater than the Godfather, Tony Montana, the Sicilian Mafia and Al Capone put together. I am a lord.

Everything is going well. Then all of a sudden some rival gang members raid my house. Kill everyone but me. I sit there watching my mother die in a pool of blood and everyone is dead. Then I feel a feeling of sorrow, sadness and depression. And then bam!! Someone kills me.

I meet God and He tells me that I am the reason why everyone is dead. I wake up ready to cry. What does this mean Beat?

-'Til I Go, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What do you think it means? It seems you got all the material things you and others around you want from the game. But in the process you lost all that you may treasure the most. Meaning your dad, mom, family and last but least your life. We think your dream may be showing you the possible price of what you and others, sort of, want in life. These are just some of our thoughts and they may be wrong, or they may be right. Do you think that losing all you love and your life was worth the momentary fame and fun you had? Do you feel more happiness, or pain from your dream and why?

New Year

A new year is coming up. '06 to '07; the year '06 went bad. Got locked up over some dumb shhh. I was doing dumb shhh—new year, new ways, time to change. New life; forget the old life. Time to stop smoking grape. Time to stop popping thizz. Putting big holes in my head the g life is over. Time to pick up a Newport and let go.

-Itchy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope you make the new year a changing year—we hope you look back years from now and see 2007 as the year that you took control of your life, and soon you will even quit smoking cigarettes, we hope.

Shed a tear

As days go by, I wonder if I'll ever live life again.
At night I cry, wondering if God will ever give me another chance.
I try to change, but its hard now;
I don't know what will happen.
My life will never be the same
That's what I get for thinking this is all a game.
As I shed a tear, wondering if my angel will come down and wipe away my tears.
'Cause the end is near,
Now I will never worry about shedding another tear.

-Big-D Donshay, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

***From The Beat:** One great thing about life is that you can always make things better. Things don't always have to be the same. Our futures lie ahead of his as a blank piece of paper waiting for words. We have the power to take control of that piece of paper and create our dreams. We all have futures ready to be unfolded. Don't ever lose hope...write your future as you choose.*

Somewhere Else To Be

I have some where else to be
Locked up is where I am
I should have stayed out of here
I didn't but I wish I had
I should be in school right now
Or hanging out with friends
I had plans to kick it tonight
But see how my crazy life ends
Being locked up isn't much fun
And it will stop me from having a life
I was hoping to be married someday
But nobody wants a trouble maker for a wife
I disobeyed and hurt my mother
I don't know why she puts up with me
I should have listened to my mom
Then in this place I wouldn't be
I know she didn't deserve it
For what I did I cry every night
Now all I do is pray to god
That I could live my life right

-Vanessa, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

***From The Beat:** That is good that you have remorse for what you have done. We are faced with many choices as we go through life and the paths those choices lead us down are varied, but if we listen to that little inner voice we are usually more satisfied with the outcome of our choices. So when you get out keep all these bad memories of this place and remember how your mom feels when you're locked up, and that might help you make the right decisions on the outs.*

Jennifer

My best friend and my lover
My companion through the journey of life
All these things you are to me
Through good times you are to me
I look into your eyes
And see all my dreams there
Most times I walk behind
To be able to watch over you
When you have a troubled mind
My need for you is true
I give my life for you.

-Miguel, Maricopa County, Arizona

***From The Beat:** Miguel to be able to truly love someone we must love and care about ourselves first. It is also important that we consistently steer our lives in a positive direction that will enhance the lives of others rather than put them in jeopardy. We wonder how much you truly care about the direction you are steering your life? We're sure this poem would mean a lot to the person you wrote it to. It sounds like you have a lot of love for her! We challenge you to get your life straight, so that you can be the man that she deserves and so you don't have to be separated from her like this!*

Now And Later

In my life are many decisions. Will I make the right one?
Or is this a game that I know can't be won?
While I think about that dilemma,
my brain goes haywire, and can't remember.
What have I learned? Who am I?
Why is it me who loses control?
I am usually nice if you meet me
just as long as you don't upset me.
I don't know why I can't hold back,
maybe it's just the place I'm at.
In my life are many decisions,
but I can't think of the right one right now.
Maybe later I'll realize and remember.
That's why this poem is called now and later.

-Anastasia, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

***From The Beat:** You usually know right from wrong, it's just the matter of wanting to "do" the right thing. Once we get in the habit of making the right choices, then we will never have to worry about getting caught up in the dilemma of thinking "this game can't be won". By making the right choices, you then know deep in your heart that you have won and you won't have to worry about spending anymore time behind brick walls and barbed wire. When faced with temptations staying focused on your goals you and living your life with dignity will free you in the "now" and prepare you for the "later".*

My Advice

I live a crazy life, out on the block
Glock clock struggling with strife
Shooting to earn my stripes
Thinking will I live to see tomorrow night
or will I have one day left of freedom?
Seeing little kids hungry with no home
Hopeless souls
Out on the cold streets
where everyone tweeks
And stay up for days with no sleep
Flip side
Why would you want to live that way?
Live smart, go to school and make big pay
without slanging yayo all night and day,
watching your back with the AK
'til you're old and gray
Hear what I say
Take my advice,
live life right
Be a kid while you still can
Take your time on becoming a man,
'cause you only got one life.

-G Poet, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

***From The Beat:** Good job on this poem! You clearly spell out the two paths that your peers have to choose from – the so called "street life" where drugs and violence are the rule and kids grow up too soon, or the path of education and a legal job. The right path is never easy, but once you start down the wrong one, it may be too late to go back. Choose wisely while you still have the chance!*

I look into your eyes
And see all my dreams there

Wish I Could Change

I have taken a lot for granted. My mom loved me so much and just wanted me to do good, and I threw her to the side as I always do. I love her so much and I wish I could change it. I know that you will never see this mom, but I love you — and I'm sorry!

-Jacob, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** Ever heard the Serenity Prayer? "God, grant me the courage to change the things I can, the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference."*

A Tear

Every night as I sit in my cell
I wonder if my life will ever prevail
Missin' my lady and my moms
With no one to turn to but the walls
My homies were never there
Waking up to nothing but guys
That's what I get for livin' my life a lie

Now a thug's cryin'
And God is replyin'
Now I've grown up to be a man
And the angels in Heaven give me one last chance

-Big-D Donshay, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: It sounds as if you have come to see that all is not lost – that you have another chance to make your future bright. Sometimes it takes a negative experience for us to realize that out current lifestyle is not working for us. Do you think that being locked up is sometimes a "blessing in disguise"?

Freedom

Freedom
What is freedom?
Are we truly free?
As that of the untamed sea?
Or is it all dreams and mentality?
Are we free to reach for the sky
before our mind and body die?
Or are we slaves
to those things that our mind craves?
My thoughts are tainted
as if my mind's been painted
All I see is the dark
As if night has left it's permanent mark

-Andrew, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Excellent writing! Great question posed – What is freedom? We believe that our minds are always free. No matter what is going on around us or who is controlling us, our minds and mentality can never be enslaved. At any given time, we can choose how to speak, how to react, how to behave, or how to be. No one, nor anything, can control or enslave our internal spirit. This my friends, is freedom. We are free as the untamed sea...

Mom: Sorry For the Trouble I Put You Through

It's my mom's birthday today. I can't even see her on her special day. That's effed up. Well yeah, I just want to thank my mom for everything she's done for me. For bein' there for me. For doing the best for me that she goes through with a struggle.

I just want to say that I'm sorry for all the wrong I caused, and puttin' you through Hell. Man, I remember the way I used to treat my mom. I used to call her names, and just tell her things that would hurt her. And after that I would just be like whateva. But I knew I was wrong. And I felt bad but never showed it. Mom I just want to say that I love you wit' all my heart. And don't let my situation bring you down. Stay strong and have faith.

Late.

-Mike Jonez, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This note of love and respect is one that we want to dedicate to all the mothers and grandmothers and aunties who have struggled to protect their loved ones from the streets and the rage that eats them up inside. All your mother wants is for you to be healthy and happy, she loves you, she forgives you, and she will always have your back. Thanks for sharing your love for your mom with The Beat community. Peace.

Me and My Truancy

Now due to me,
me and my truancy
From running trough these streets at early puberty
What influenced me it was the jewelry
Tryin' to get cash so I can do it like the O-G's
The '80s the thick gold rope chains
Life is all crazy getting' rich off cocaine
So I been caught up dog
But nothin' like Usher
More like hustler
All night on customers
Tryin' to get my pay up
Jealousy the envy gotta watch cause they spray ya up (watch the haters y'all)
Rollin' dice on blocks double parked on the one way
An breakin' laws was the callin'
We leave the hood early in the morning
So I hope up in my scrape and hit up Denny's for some grub
And since you know who I am, you know I'm rollin' with the thugs.

-Capo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Seeing your dazzling rhymes fall off into the glorification of dice and Denny's is like watching someone throw gold coins in a slot machine...all that value, wasted on a losing gambler. You aim too low, young Capo. You should be dining at a fine restaurant, not a Denny's, you should be patrolling the corridors of a high rise office, not the grimy pavement. If you truly believe in yourself and your talent (we do) then aim higher... farther... it's a big world are you ready to take it over?

Life Is ... !

life is hell
life is stupid
life isn't great
life is a future
that is not there
life is what is
meant to be
life is a b—
life is not real
because we all
got some problems
life is not fear
life is a path
that put you through wrong
and good things
screw life
it does not matter
to me

-Casper the Ghost, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, for someone who seldom chooses to put words on the page, you've got an awful lot to say! Still, we believe life just might have more good than wrong coming along your way, if only you decide to do what's right no matter what the consequences. In other words don't play and try to get over on life, like someone up gambling away his money all night, but just keep it simple and do the next right thing. Your life will change. You'll begin to hear the birds sing and feel the sun shine, and let the positive things in life begin to direct your heart and mind.

Why?

Why are kids having kids when some can't even take care of themselves?
Why do kids join gangs when the only thing they're trying to do is run away from their problems?
Why don't kids go to school; just because they think they're cool?
Why don't kids have faith in themselves; all they want to do is live life on their own terms.
Why do kids do drugs; is it because they have nothing else to turn to but the pipe and needle?
Why, why, why? It's all a mystery.

-Big-D Donshay, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: "Why"..... Such a powerful, yet frustrating word. Your piece presents so many perplexing questions. I wonder what answers other people would have to such questions?

Realizing That You Don't Love Me

J.T.: What's up Big Vic?
Vic: Shhh, jus' chillin'.
Tiana: Hey, J.T.
J.T.: What's up, Tiana?
Ultra: How are y'all doing?
J.T.: Baby, come here for a minute.
Ultra: Yes, baby.
J.T.: What do you wanna do tonight?
Ultra: Let's go out to eat, and then go see Saw Three.
J.T.: All right. Vic, you and your girl coming?
Vic: Yup.
J.T.: Well, be ready around nine o'clock. Baby, you get ready, 'cause we are about to go to the mall.
Ultra: Okay, honey.
J.T.: Are you ready yet? Let's go.
Narrator: Now, at the mall!
Ultra: Baby, I'm getting them Jordans.
J.T.: I'm'a get them, too! Who is that dude that keeps looking over here? Do he knows us? Hello? Wake up! Do you hear me talking to you? Is that your new man or something? You're looking at him hella hard!
Ultra: No. Why would you say something like that? You know that I love you too much to be cheating on you.
J.T.: Please, don't start.
Phone: Ring! ... Ring! ... Ring!
J.T.: Oh, what's up Big Vic?
Vic: Nothing. It's about eight forty something — are you ready yet?
J.T.: I'm leaving the mall now.
Narrator: At Vic's house now.
Vic: What's up, brah? I'm hella high!
J.T.: Who you telling, Vic? I'm'a have my girl drive. I need to talk to you; get into the back! Baby, drive.
Ultra: Okay, baby.
Vic: Baby, get into the front seat.
Tiana: Okay, boo boo.
J.T.: Brah, while we was at the mall, some dude keep looking at us. Making hella eye contact with my woman, like he knew her or something. And she just a sitting there smiling her ash off at this ninja. That shhh got me thinking.
Vic: Don't trip brah. She ain't doing anything. She loves you too much.
J.T.: I would hope your right, because I love her too much to just let her walk away.
Narrator: To be continued.

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We enjoy the vision of you and Big Vic out there in the free world with your girlfriends going to the movies. But now, what is your last line supposed to mean? If love is real, if it turns out not to be mutual, and one party wants to walk — love sets him or her free. Don't you see? That other stuff is just vanity and selfish ego. Love is all about freedom, and out of freedom, when love is mutual, you choose each other. Without free choice, where's the love? If you love in vain, take it like a man. We know you've been hurt before, let it go. With love, trust is a must.

This will be my last week writing to The Beat. I want to thank each and everyone of you for always talking to me and being helpful by taking the time out to help me with my writing.

Good Bye

Dear Beat Within: This is your boy little Jt. This will be my last week writing to The Beat. I want to thank each and everyone of you for always talking to me and being helpful by taking the time out to help me with my writing.

I will miss you Tj., Allan and David. Tj, you are always in my prayers. Stay strong, and you all keep your head up! I get out in June for sure, and I will try to make it to The Beat. Always, your boy!

Lastly, I really will miss you all. Be safe. Much love from ya boy, J.Teezy

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, as we write these words, it's been a month since you've been gone (these writings got lost for a minute!), and we miss you sorely. But you'd been there too long, and at least you can see the end of the tunnel now. Hope to see you at our offices. You're welcome to drop by anytime! No strings attached. Much love and respect.

Merry Christmas!

merry christmas to the one i love
even on this day of love for all
remembering the love of one whose call
redeemed all those whose hearts his love might move
yet only one love does my spirit prove
chosen in a passion like a squall
having in such ecstasy withal
rejoiced in what we were created of
in such love do we find our way outdoors
so to be drawn to love of flesh and soul
traveling beyond our village green
moving towards the wash along our shores
as our love joins the greater love unseen
shining with dark passion on the whole

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know we admire your poetic powers, and we confess that even your anachronisms such as "our village green" which reflect back on both English poetic tradition and its romantic commonplaces, such as nostalgia for "the village green" as a symbol of rustic (latter-day Attic) grace in social equality. Then you move to an almost Whitmanic gesture toward the seashore as the liminal point of transcendence — ah, the romantic tradition planted on the American shore! Yet the "dark passion" in your concluding line, like the earlier passionate "squall" is a troubling transcendence, most un-merry, looking past Christ's pastoral nativity, perhaps, to his darker Passion on the Cross.

Illusory Love

love is fake
love is an illusion
cast upon a person
who is missing something
love is what they allow
to take over their minds
to keep them occupied
love is good but not real
just a figment
of one's imagination
it will also keep you from seeing
these institutions
love can be good
but can also be bad
it can make your life happy
but also can make you sad

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you live it, it's real, whether it's born in the imagination or not. What do you do that isn't born in your mind first? So we get how love is good 'cause you give some examples of the good it does. What makes it bad? Is everything that makes you sad a bad thing? But then isn't the sadness, not the love, the bad thing? Still, it does seem like there can be "bad love" — for example, the way an addict loves his drug of choice; perhaps when love is self-destructive or keeps you in a destructive cycle, it's a bad thing?

Still Love Her

I miss you! I can't stop thinking about you girl. What I'm trying to say is: Come on home to Main-e-bo. I say I love you and you say you love me too but that I play all these head games so you just can't trust me. I hurt you once, and I hurt you twice; I never listen to or take your advice.

Some days you will get angry like, "How could Main-e do this to me? Did you love me? Did you lie to me why you promise that you wouldn't leave me? If you knew you were going to cheat on me, then why didn't you just leave me?" And now that you have left me, it seems like I have nothing left inside me. The day you left, it was like my heart left my soul. Baby, I love you so much!

Man, there's so much I want to say about the way you make me feel and how much I think about you each and every day. Time is going by so slowly, but my tears are coming out so fast! Everyone knows that I love you, and I know that me and you can make it last. I have faith in us, baby. All you have to do is just believe that I want you to be a part of my future. I wanna be able to feel your sweet kisses all over my body. Okay, maybe I'm getting a lil' too into it, but me and you, baby, can make it because, baby, this is real!

I'm sitting here struggling, my t-shirt full of tears. I really don't want to lose you twice, and that is one of my biggest fears. As I cry at night, I pray that you're okay. God, please help me, guide me, and lead me the right way. There is a lot going on right now. I need you here with me. I know that you really love me. You tell me that you do! But one thing I need you to know, is that I really need you! And I can't be without you! Baby, I love you.

-Main-e-bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How can you make her believe that you won't cheat on her again? It seems like that's what she needs to feel in order to give you another chance. Maybe, too, she realizes the choices you're making in your life on the whole are not so good for you or her either, 'cause they have you here facing serious time. Can you promise to change your life, finish your education, get a job and do right? That thug life works against you're staying true, 'cause it's all about getting over at someone else's expense — and lying is second nature to a gangster. So let her know that you're truly ready to change your life, and that she can trust you because, top-to-bottom, you're turning from wrong to right!

Changed My Life

The Hall really has changed me a lot. It really changed my life. Now I have to understand it's not about me anymore — it's about me and my baby!

I wake up every morning hoping that I won't have to have my baby while I'm in jail, because if that ever happened — I don't know what I would do.

-Nisha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You explained to us that you meant if you had your baby in the system, it would take your baby away from you. Before you get lost in fear, talk to family members and have them see if they could take your baby till you're free and clear. Of course we know your first choice is to be, and to have and keep your baby, out of here. We hope that for you, too, but have a back-up plan — and either way, it will all end coo'.

I have no words I can say, none that will let you feel my heart or see my thoughts. Rather, all I can do is show you through what I do that all I have, all that I am, is here for you.

Want To Be In Love

This Lil' Main-e-bo trying to get with you! Just sit back and read this lil' one. I want to be your friend and lover, doing lil' things to brighten your life and watch you burst into a warm smile that says, "Thank you for being you." But what I want most is that you fall in love with me.

Sometimes late at night, I think of the color of your eyes when you look at me. I have no words I can say, none that will let you feel my heart or see my thoughts. Rather, all I can do is show you through what I do that all I have, all that I am, is here for you. I don't ask for all your time, just some time for me and a place in your heart.

Let's work slowly with each other and build a relationship that we both can enjoy being a part of. Let's share love and understand that neither of us is perfect. We are both subject to human frailties. Let's encourage each other to pursue our dreams, even when we're weary from trying. Let's expect the best that we both have to give and still love when we fall short of our expectations. Let's be candid with each other and point out strengths and weaknesses. Let's understand each others personal philosophy, even if we don't agree. Let's be friends as well as lovers.

It is so bewildering that I cannot put into words what you mean to me. I know those words are so inadequate. You are all of those beautiful tender things ever said and much, much more. I don't just want you — I need you, lil' one. So I must reduce the way I feel into three small words, because they are the only words that can begin to say express the meaning of what is written here: "I love you."

-Main-e-bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A lovely and persuasive piece of writing. It is to the same girl that in your other piece you say you still love, right? But then why don't you say, "... fall in love with me" and not "... with me again"? 'Cause is this is to another girl altogether, what's up? You're promising one you won't cheat at the very time you're declaring your love to another? No, it can't be. It's the same person in both. Right? If not, man, you're in love with love, not with the person you're writing above. No diss intended. Or maybe you like practicing your powers of amorous persuasion with words, which we must say, you seem pretty good at!

I would like to change the world! I want to tell people about the life I had in jail and tell them to make something out of themselves. I want to tell them —— be a leader, not a follower.

I Want To Be a Good Mother

The life I would want to live — is to be a good mother. And I would like to have a good personality. I would like to change the world! I want to tell people about the life I had in jail and tell them to make something out of themselves. I want to tell them — be a leader, not a follower.

-Nisha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In your other piece this week, you tell us you have a baby on the way. Change your life, and you'll change that baby's world forever. As for what you want to tell people — you're doing that here and now! Very cool.

Growing Up

From birth my life was said to be the
beginning of a struggle
Never would've thought of the day pencils I
would have to smuggle
Let me shine some light on you about my so-
far 17 years of life
City boy, so you know the choices were the
gun or the knife
In the beginning thangs were planned and
going well
Then money got scarce and the hustle was
what I had to sell
Started out slow then progressed to all
nighters in the T and T's
Seeing bums and crackheads all day became
of nothing but ease
Lost lives all around me really affected me in
a major way
To hide the temptations and stress Mary Jane
was with me every day
But the system don't know me but judges me
by my crime
They only take two looks at me and the
papers
Then sentence me to exaggerated time

-Vero

From The Beat: Were your choices really only "the gun or the knife?" Haven't people you grew up with and some older than you made choices different from either A or B? In other words, are you taking full responsibility for the choices you've made, or do you think responsibility lies elsewhere because of where you came up? How much do you control the decisions you make and how much are you under the control of your environment?

A Different '07

My new year will be different in many ways. I'm going to be smarter and wiser in my actions so I can and will avoid coming to this place for forgotten people who made wrong choices.

-Someone

From The Beat: If you follow your own simple advice, you certainly will be "Someone."

2007 Different from 2006

The year 2006 is going to end in a minute and '07 is going to start fresh. I wish my life would start again like a new year starting fresh, with nothing to look back over your shoulder to make sure someone is not creepin' up on you or a car passing fast or slow and they're looking at me for some stripes

-Maney

From The Beat: We had to take out the last sentence, Maney, because it sounded too much like more of the same looking over your shoulder-type stuff. So we want to tell you that wishes do sometimes come true, but you have to make some difficult choices to make it happen.

Big Difference

Well, to me, '06 will be way different form '07 'cause a lot of stuff. Like for example, I got my girl pregnant in '06. The baby is due in '07. And that's the difference between '06 and '07.

-Baghdad Indians

From The Beat: If you are to be a father in '07, then the difference between everything that came before and everything that comes after will be dramatically different, and not just for the moment your baby is born, but for all the time you choose to be a father. Notice, we use the word "choose" because being a father is so much more than providing your genes. You also have to give love, attention, patience, nourishment, nurturing, and being there to guide and instruct. That's being a father, and it's a life-long commitment! Good luck.

My Lifestyle

-Lil' Mon

From The Beat: We took out your entire poem because it is entirely inappropriate for The Beat. We changed your title too, yet, not only can you stop, but you ARE stopped. (And "they" can stop you for longer and longer periods of time, right up to forever...) If you CHOOSE not to stop, then be prepared for the inevitable consequences.

Your Eyes

When I look into your eyes
I feel pain and at the same time
I feel that you're disappointed in me
When I look into your eyes
I feel love and at the same time
I feel comfortable but at times
When I look into your eyes
It looks like you're about to cry
Because I am locked up
And that's when I feel the worst
I'm sorry dad

-Peter

From The Beat: This is a beautiful poem, Peter, because it captures both the pride and love your father feels for his son, and the let down he feels for the things you've done and the consequences you're experiencing. Your conscience is hurting you, and that is a very good sign — of maturity, of responsibility, and of change. We hope you show this to your dad.

People Dying

There be people dying out the cuts. It's kind of shady because I'm over here locked up and I can't do nothing about what they did to that person they killed. It mostly pisses me off because after they killed him the same kind of people go to the funeral. They killed a person that was cool with almost everybody. I never thought this would've happened to him. He was the last person I thought was gonna get killed. He wasn't even gang affiliated. Well, I guess things happen for a reason so 'till next time, stay up Beat. RIP Dora.

-Looney

From The Beat: We're very sorry about Dora's murder, but still, Looney, we had to take out one line. Yes, of course you are pissed off, because you lost someone you love. But can you understand that every human being is attached to someone that loves them, and that they experience their losses just the same as you? There's a saying that goes, "Why do we kill people who kill people to show that killing people is wrong?"

I just want to get out of here, go to school, get into football and get a job and man-up.

I just want to get out of here, go to school, get into football and get a job and man-up.

It's Powerful

The first time I laid my eyes on you I fell in love, so deep in love that I would do anything to protect you. You might think I'm talking about drugs or a girl. No, I'm talking about something that is so addictive that it had me on it like white on rice. What I fell in love with is something the community and the society is very afraid of, something that I wasn't afraid of then but I am afraid of now. It is so powerful that it will have a powerful effect on someone's life, especially my life.

-Kazuo

From The Beat: Okay, Kazuo, we are still confused by what it is that society is afraid of, but which you fell in love with and have to deal with the consequences of that love. Is it violence? Weapons? What is so addictive that you can hand your freedom over to the county? Or, have you fallen in love with juvenile hall?

Clear Thinking

When you're out on the streets you don't care about anything. You just want to have fun and be with your homies. You don't put attention to your parents or the people who love you. But once you're locked up you start to think all the things that your parents tried to tell you.

-Mondragon

From The Beat: So, the question is, what happens when you leave here and go back to your parents? Do you revert to your former uncaring ways, or do you remember how much your parents meant to you when you were locked up and treat them the way they have earned the right to be treated?

2006-2007

2006 and 2007 will be very different. I'm gonna go back to school and get into football. I'm also looking forward to getting a job. Why? Because I hate to see my mom and auntie workin' 24/7. So I'ma man up and get a job so my momma won't work. Once I get out and achieve my goals I have planned, I'ma pay something like bills or something.

I just want to get out of here, go to school, get into football and get a job and man-up. By January in the year 2007 it's going to be very different. I'm planning on changing for my good and my family's good. I also want to start to find a new life and stay away from here.

-Chuneuneu

From The Beat: You want all the right things — a new life of freedom, finishing school to let you get a job to give your mom and auntie the break they deserve. But that's just the beginning. What you need is determination and patience, because there will be times that you will be tempted to return to old, familiar ways — ways that lead away from school and back here! So, we applaud you for the goals you've set, and caution you to be careful and take it one day at a time.

Changing My Life In 2007

When I get out of jail and it hits the new year 2007, I plan on getting a job, doing something professional to make my mom proud of me for doing in my life. My dream for the new year is to get my mom a house as well as my little brothers and myself.

-Travalin

From The Beat: Getting a house is something most people can't do until after they have worked a number of years and built up their credit by paying all their bills on time. If you did that, you would definitely make your mom proud.

Love At First Sight

Do I believe in love at first sight? Yes, I do believe in love at first sight, because if I didn't, what would this be called? I also believe in love at first sight because it happened to me.

You see, I met this boy and I knew right then it was love a first sight. Not only because the way that he held me in his arms, but also because he showed me so much love when I felt no one loved me. I have been with him for a year and that's my love at first sight.

Love always.

-G's Wifey

From The Beat: We're confused... You say his name started with the letter "C," but you call yourself G's Wifey. Are you two-timing C with G? Naw, we're just kidding. We hope this love continues to bring you happiness.

I'm Happy

So, I'm happy I'm alive and I'm happy to be here. I thank God for pulling me through. It's hard being away from those whom I love, but I will be united with them one day. I got love for the streets 'cause it's a big part of me, but I'm not saying it's the best thing in the world, hustlin' out there, tryin' to make a dollar out of 50 cent just to help my momma out with the rent.

Yeah, grindin' is a way of life if you on the streets. "Bangin' is a must." That's what I thought in the beginning, but I've opened my eyes to see the bigger picture. It's not worth it. So open your eyes, look past all the evil an' madness that has corrupted your thoughts, an' lift your head up to the sky.

-Not Signed

From The Beat: We wish you had put your name to this piece. What made you "see the bigger picture?" Was it coming here? Growing up? Losing friends? Having your own hopes and dreams of a family and a life? Whatever it was, we're glad you have opened your eyes.

My Message

You ain't seen what I have seen
You ain't been where I been
You all are not even my friends
I am trying to carry a message
Because red and blue people are dyin' over colors
they choose
Hear what I say
Day after day we die over nothing
I want no discussion
The end. No buts about it
When you get caught slippin' with no straps
After you just pulled a jack over some crack
My brother I love got shot in the head
Right in the back
RIP my brother

-Lil' Scavenger

From The Beat: We read this is a mixed message, LS. The first part is that part of your generation is destroying itself "over nothing," and we agree with you. It is an ongoing tragedy. But when you advise your generation to arm itself, we think you only contribute to the killing cycle. We think being strapped only gives you the illusion of protection. But it also gives you the illusion of power and invulnerability, and so you take chances you ordinarily would not take. Only death comes out of the barrel of a gun.

Just Chance

Preventing something from happening, like if I would tell my cousin not to go to that party, nothing would have happened. If I would just tell him to pick me up he wouldn't be gone. So I had a chance to talk to him for the last time. If I would have told him to pick me up I would have prevented something from happening.

-Jetas

From The Beat: You can't blame yourself for the choices your cousin made. It's possible that if he had picked you up, both of you would be gone. Concentrate on preventing yourself from coming back here.

Love At First Sight

Have you every fallen in love at first sight? Well I have, and I can tell you it's the best feeling you could ever have. Until the person you "fell in love" with hurts you.

It all started back in June, 2005 when my sister and two of her friends came over to my house. Now, I knew one of them for a couple of months, but I didn't know the other one. He was kinda shy and he kept his head down most of the time. But when he did look up, that's when it hit me, my love of first sight.

We messed around that day and that's when my feelings for him got stronger. The next day I called him up and told him how I felt and he told me he had a girlfriend. My heart broke into pieces. Me and him are friends now, but he will always be my first love. He will always have that special place in my heart.

I love you, and you know who you are.

-Brown Eyes

From The Beat: We understand the things that are going on in your body that make messing around with this guy feel like love. But when you consider that he had to be "cheating" on his girlfriend to mess with you, does it make you wonder if he was your boyfriend, wouldn't he be cheating on you?

Thank You

Thank you for your passionate enthusiasm
Throughout the time that I've been here
Also, thank you for always doing your best teaching us
Tu siempre has trabajado del Corazon (You always work
from the heart)
Thank you!
Happy Birthday!

-Jose

From The Beat: Whoever is the recipient of this birthday greeting is lucky to have you because you recognize how lucky you are to have this teacher in your life.

My Way

I'm supposed to write how 2007 is going to be different than 2006. Honestly, I think I will change in some things but I think my ways will always be the same.

I plan on treating my family better. I still intend to get respect from everyone I cross paths with. If I don't get it, I'm sure he will show it for me before he walks away. I will always have my pride. That's probably why I end up in a place like this.

-Nacho

From The Beat: Maybe it's just a matter of definition, Nacho. We know people who take great pride in being able to walk away from a fight, for example. We also know people who have been able to forgive others who had done some terrible things to them and their families, and for those people we bear the utmost respect.

Love At First Sight

I love the way you look
I love the way you smell
I love the way you don't complain
I love when you come to me
I want you in my life all the time

-Jordan

From The Beat: We know you didn't finish this poem Jordan, but already it expresses a powerful love. How you finish this poem may depend on how your relationship develops from here.

Today

Today ain't such a good day
Wakin' up in these halls
I'd rather be up out of here
And wearin' my own drawe's

-Young Hop

From The Beat: Well, of course you would. And you will be up out of here wearing your own drawers. Will you be able to keep it when you get it?

Now I Can't

I used to wake up next to my boyfriend every morning
But now I can't
I used to go to my school every day
But now I can't
I used to stay out late, partying into the night
But now I can't
I used to see my dreams from behind a foggy Pyrex
But now I can't
I used to fill my lungs with nicotine daily
But now I can't
And I used to go to bed at night (or early morning) where I wanted to
But now I can't
I used to live my life the way I wanted to
But now I can't

-Lauren

From The Beat: The refrain, "But now I can't" sums up the reality of juvenile hall (and every jail). But some of the ways you wanted to live your life (like that daily nicotine habit and partying into the night) certainly contributed to your being here and aren't really good for your wellbeing. Maybe you should examine the old ways to see if they are in need of some changes.

Keep It Real

Do you keep it real?
Ask yourself dat question
If you ain't,
Stay away from the game
because it don't need you!

-Fernando

From The Beat: So, we guess that your answer is yes. So, we guess the system will be seeing you for a while, because — if you're keeping it real — that comes with the game.

The Power Of A Smile

The power of a gun can kill
And the power of fire can burn
The power of wind can chill
And the power of the mind can learn
The power of anger can rage inside
Until it tears you apart
But the power of a smile
Especially yours, can heal a frozen heart

-Jose

From The Beat: And the power of a poet can make us understand.

Love

Love is something you have for a family member
Love is something you can have forever
Love is something that can be taken away
Love is something that can't be given away
Love is not lost or found
Love is not to be played around
Love is love

-Richard

From The Beat: Can you imagine trying to get through this world without love? Some people do, so you are lucky to know that you are among the loved.

Walk The Streets

Walk the streets controlling my friends
I'm only a boy but they make me feel like a man.
I have a responsibility to take care of them, yet they care for me.
I sometimes believe I belong to the streets.
Now I'm in Juvy, and my friends aren't here,
But unlike most of the boys I know I have nothing to fear.
I know I'm no man as long as I'm locked up against my own will.
A quarter of these punks is snitches
Half are straight fools
Fifteen percent are just remedial,
Ten percent ain't got shhh to lose...two kids on the way just a few days apart
Sitting in this mutha showed me a plan
And allowed me to see to that no minor here is close to being a man.

-JJ

From The Beat: This poem is jammed with ideas and insights... you've got eyes that see clearly. Probably the other people you see around you who are "punks" or "fools" are going through some of what you are inside, or like you say, they feel like they have nothing else to lose. But then you tell us you have a plan, and of course we're hoping you tell us that plan in your next poem.

I'm Outta Here

I'm 'bout to be free beezy
The DA can't see me
I'm 'bout to be back on the streets, streets,
And I'm about to eat, eat
I beat two cases this whole year
I'm like a polar bear
I ain't never scared
I fight every case to the end
I ain't goin' to the pen
'cause I'm in it to win
so I can't wait till I get out
so I can creep like a mouse
I'm outta here, you'll see me in the streets, ya hear.

-Lil' Suave

From The Beat: "In it to win," young Suave? We hope so, that's all we or anyone else want, is to see you win. But those streets are a losing game, so we hope you stay away... you have too much going for you, and too many people that care about you, to throw it all away. Peace and all our best, stay in touch.

Why is Life This Way

Brung up in the street
Did not choose to live this way
Never had moms and pops,
Brung up by the OG's on the block
at the age of ten selling rocks.
Making money to keep shoes and clothes on my back.
At the age of eleven I held my first three rocks.
My pockets feeling fat,
I thought I was the shhh in elementary school with all the little chicks.
But ninjas had to stop, kept hitting the block,
and finally died from bossing up
eating hard trying to survive.
life's an itch and then you die

-D

From The Beat: Your rhymes and your skills dazzle like stars, but in the future you say you can't go far, we think you're wrong, if you make a choice, Live out a life as strong as your voice!

If...

If the world was a stage I will try my best to stay coo' and not choke because of stage fright!

-Funk

From The Beat: Good answer! In real life, just like in the stage, we freeze up if we worry about all the people watching us and judging us. A great actor, on stage and in life, focuses on the play and on his role, and does not worry about the audience!

I'm Tired of This Place

I need to go home and never look back again, try to do nothing to come back in this place, because I hate to have to do what they want , when they want me to. And my time is coming Thursday, I'm going home for good.

-Anthony

From The Beat: It's good to hear that you are so determined, and we hope we never see you again at all, unless you set yourself up to fail, by not obeying the rules of probation. What is your plan to succeed? What must you do to never see the inside of juvenile hall again?

RIP Ant

RIP Bra Bra, I miss you down here.
But I know you watching over me
so there's no need for fear.
The same lil' ninja we used to kick it with had to pull that trigga
And now I'm sitting here, mad, 'cause I'm missing you ninja.
Lil' Ant, my brother from another mother.
I know you in a better place
and every time I look up in the sky I see your face.
I love you Bra Bra, see you sooner or later.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: In this moving and heartbreaking eulogy, you hit on one of the cruelest parts of the streets: The same neighbor you played with when you were still on the slides and swings can grow up to take the life of another loved one. This crazy drama, the guns, the pride, the fear... it all ads up and turns neighbor against neighbor, cousin against cousin... There is hope though, and the hope is in you, and the fact that you turned this private pain of yours into a poem, a public appreciation to a lost loved one, and a small piece of warm feeling in the middle of a cold, cold life. You have a gift that can help you break free, and honor Ant's memory with your new life.

Unhappy Birthday To Me

My birthday is on December 24, '06, and I'm going to be spend my birthday and Christmas in jail, I'ma be hella mad, 'cause this shhh gon' be hella weak.

But when December 26 comes around I'm gon' be out this bootsy ass place, I'm gonna be hella happy to be at home in my own bed and my own clothes. I'm gonna be at the house tucked in with my girlfriend every day in my house. I'ma go back to school and get back on the basketball team.

-Guan "F" Baby

From The Beat: It's not too late to give yourself a birthday present. How's this. Cut this piece you just wrote out of The Beat and keep it. Then when you get out, when you get tempted to mess up again, re-read what you wrote in hear and let it remind you of all the reasons why you do not want to ever come back!

Leaving The Hall

The Hall has helped me because it has given me time to rest and reflect on what I wasn't to do with my life. I think about my family and how much I affect them. The hall also is like a slap in the face because every time I come here, people always tell me I'm too smart to be wasting my time here. Altogether it has its good sides and its bad sides.

Thank you for all your support and taking the time to get to know me. This is going to be the last time I write you guys, and I hope that everyone misses me. I'll be gone by the next time. I see ya'll in heaven.

Much love and respect

-Manny

From The Beat: We will miss you, but like you, we'll be happy to never see you in the Hall again. But as you change your life around and keep taking those steps, please write to The Beat and fill us in? Why wait for heaven? Stay in touch.

Mafia

If the world was a stage I would play the role of a mafia hit man (main character). I would go around taking ninja's heads when I want, getting the easy way out. I'd be having people rob banks and sellin' weed...and I wouldn't die at the end.

-Lil' Dame

From The Beat: In all the movies, the mafia hit man goes down at the end. Why wouldn't it be the same for you? Living this lifestyle you would always be on guard against enemies, and your own people. Why is this lifestyle so appealing to you? There is so many other exciting and thrilling ways to live. You know what they say: Who lives by the sword dies by the sword.

I'm Still Waiting To Be Sentenced

I'm still waiting to be sentenced. I've been waiting for about two months, still my future is unknown if the judge gives me a chance

I will rise to the throne but still my future is unknown.

-Lil' Rascal

From The Beat: Your future is unknown, but not just because you're waiting to be sentenced. Your future is unknown (to us, at least) because we don't know what your dreams are. Where do you want to be in ten years? What would be your dream job? Would you want to be a doctor, a fighter pilot, a tattoo artist, a guitar player, a teacher? You tell us... we want to see you on that throne too, but you're the only one who can get you there!

I'm Not The Type

If the world was a stage, I wouldn't be on it. I'm not the type to want to be on stage or be seen so bad. I would be in the background but be seen no more than two times. And I would be the stage itself, So I'm already the main character to the Beat. I hope someone read it.

-Dionte

From The Beat: You recognized what too many people don't see. The star on stage may be the one that gets the attention, but it's the man behind the scenes who pulls the strings: The true master of the stage isn't on the stage but nearby. He's the director, the producer, and ... of course, the writer.

I'm Still Mobbin'

Man I'm locked up but I'm still mobbin'.
I let all that robbin' go, but I'm still mobbin'
Ninjas be snitchin' but I'm still mobbin'.
These pigs try to put me away for life but I'm still mobbin'
When ninjas pop shots in the hood I be still mobbin'
You know the cops is watchin'
The streets is talkin'
These girls is unfaithful and family ungrateful
My ninjas ain't loyal my ninjas ain't lawyers but I'm still mobbin'
When everyone leaves me for dead, I'm still mobbin'
And when moms kicked me out I be still mobbin'
When The Beat Within ask what do you do for a livin', I tell them I be mobbin'
And when I'm dead and gone, my ninjas gon' be mobbin'
... straight up , not down.

-Teezy

From The Beat: Another snapping and crackling poem, Teezy...we love the way you end each line with that same shout of defiance... nothing can bring you down, and nothing should, as long as you fight back with the spirit of the artist that you are. But what does mobbin' mean to you? It could mean all sorts of shady street antics, the kind that hurt people, especially you, or it could mean getting that strength to keep struggling, no matter what, and lifting yourself up out of the streets. Once you decide what mobbin' means to you, then you'll know whether or not you are truly "straight up, not straight down"

Stage, World, Students

If I take the time to imagine the part I would play if the world was a stage, I would play the role of a hero. Teach people how to be good and teach them from bad to good.

I would be a role model my advice would be more stronger than a prince's kiss to the princess. I would be a teacher and teach what I have learned and make sure my students follow the right path and do their best.

-Kahn

From The Beat: Look like you are ready to live up to the promise behind the meaning of your name and be a true leader. There is no better time than the present... what is the right path? Tell us, the readers and writers of The Beat, what it is you see as the true direction you must follow!

Dreams About Me

My dreams be about a whole lot of different stuff. When I'm in here I dream about getting out. When I'm out I really don't remember my dreams, because I be having my mind on some other stuff.

When I was little I use to have dreams about me being in the car. It would throw me in the back seat and strap me down in the back. It would drive by itself and dive into the water. But by the time it was going off the cliff, I would always wake up.

-Paul

From The Beat: It's amazing that you remember that car dream so well. Have you thought of anything that may relate to that dream? Sometimes we have dreams because of something that has happened. Do you ever dream of staying out? If so, can you make that dream happen?

When I'm In Here

Juvenile hall has helped me in some ways I guess. When I'm in here I don't be worrying about all the bull that be goin' on in my life, and I kinda enjoy that. I can get a good night sleep when I'm here. I also get closer to my family when I'm here. I feel way healthier too since I aint doin' no drugs and eatin' right. The only time I go to school is when I'm here. And I've learned a lot of skills here that I can use throughout life. I guess the only time I feel like I'm really doing good is when I'm in here.

-Ryan

From The Beat: Being in there actually shows you a different way of living your life. The same things you do in there you can do at home. There's peer pressure and consequences in there, just as there is on the streets. Yet you choose to do things differently. Why is that? We believe you can live your life the same way at home, if you choose to do so?

RIP To All My Loved Ones

I've lost a lot of my loved ones over the past couple of years. So I want to say: Y'all always will be missed but never forgotten.

-Lil' Laron

From The Beat: Thanks for the sharing love (we can't do RIP lists any longer but), we appreciate the thought over New Year's. We used to do an annual RIP issue with both covers listing names.

Juvie

Juvenile Hall has changed my life because when you're in there you cannot do anything like you do on the streets. You can't see your family like you always do. You see your family like once a day. You can't be with your friends like you always be with them. You can't be outside ridin' your bike. You can't eat what you want in there. There are lots of things you can't do in there when you are in Juvenile hall.

-Julio

From The Beat: That's right, everything you do is controlled by other people when you're locked up. Not so fun is it?

Don't Do What You Can't take

What's up Beat, this yo' boy Khan what it do? Today is 12/19/06, so how are y'all guys and girls that read this?

I don't think the Hall helped me that much, but we should learn from our mistakes and what we all do wrong. We should do right and when we hit the streets we gotta stay away from danger and the dangerous ways.

I think the Hall might make me better, stronger, and smarter, 'cause when I get out I don't wanna come back and I see that I don't wanna come back and I should do the right things, all the time. We all do make mistakes and we all can learn from them. We all learn.

-Khan

From The Beat: If you had to pick the one thing you learned about life from spending time in the hall, what would it be? We're waiting on your wisdom!

Hey Beat

This be Raskal. Man, I'm sick and tired of everyone in here. All they do is talk, but when you get up to do something they get scared and run to they room. With they tail between they legs. Still tryin' to act hard. But I aint gonna waste my breath on them. Well until pen meets paper. Alrato (Alright).

-Raskal

From The Beat: So now you know what and who you're dealing with. Enough about them though, what's going on with you? We hope to hear more about you than others.

Baby On the Way

I went to court the other day, they playin' wit' me. They don't want me or my bra to get out. I can't wait to get to the outs because it's girls out there waiting for me and my bra. All y'all ninjas in here actin' like y'all hard, but y'all know y'all don't get down on the outs. I'm waiting to see if I'm going to camp or a group home, but I hope they let a player go to camp because I got a baby on the way, and I'm tryin' to start my program, They got me in Max like I'm some type of killa or something. (to be continued)

-Mike Jonez

From The Beat: Whoah, stop the presses! We didn't know that on top of everything else you are thinking about, you've got a baby on the way too. Now is the time to straight up face up and write about your dad, whether you hate him or not. Because if you're about to be a dad too, then you have to start thinking about how you do or don't want to be like the man who either did or didn't raise you. You know how they say the sins of the father are the sins of the son, well in a way it's true. Unless we fight hard to change, we often follow in our parents footsteps? Will you? If not, how not?

Irritated

Mayn what's up with it Beat? It's yo' boy Mike Jonez. Well anyways, I've been in this place for like 92 days, and this shhh is stressful. People be doin' hella shhh for nothing. That stuff makes me like damn, what the hell. People hella retarded, they don't know how to ask. And why ninjas gon' ask stupid questions too?

I ask questions, but not stupid ones. They be askin' why they not on top ten. Why I got room-time and just hella shhh.

Man, you guys know why you not on top ten, you know why you got room-time.

Then they want to go bad and try to argue the' way out of it. You got an hour, it's bad, you got it, you can't give it back, so deal with that. I don't know what else to say. So guess what, later !

-Mike Jonez

From The Beat: Scientists have done tests that can teach us a lot about jail: when too many mice are locked up in a cage together, they start to behave unnaturally. They get aggressive towards each other and fight each other because the crowding makes them crazy. People are the same way, but there are different things they can do to keep themselves from going off on each other. One way is to do what you just did, take that aggravation and irritation and spill it on the paper so that there's no confrontation and added stress/room-time. The best thing to do with this kind of thing is to write it down (with as many curses as you want) and then rip that piece of paper and throw it away. It's just another trick for holding on to your humanity in a system that is tries to take it away. Peace.

Hoping For The Best

I had a dream a few days ago that my girlfriend came up here to the Hall and visited me like on a Sunday. I was so happy to see her I gave her a hug I wanted to do more than just that, you feel me, but anyway ... she is old enough to come here, but my PO is playing trying to get her a pass. But I'm gonna get one sooner or later.

But The Hall had changed me in all types of ways, 'cause when I get out of here I'm going to change my life around and do the right thing, for I will not see this place.

When I get out me and my girl are going to get our own place for a fact. Until then I hope I beat this case, so I can do all this and make that happen with my girl.

All I can do now is hope for the best and pray for the best. So I hope it works out. Yo' boy Lil' Rome, holla!

-Lil' Rome

From The Beat: It's good that there's someone you care about on the outs, and that you are thinking about making a home for yourself. But we want to know more about how you are going to change your life around. You're coming up on manhood, and it makes sense that you want to live like an independent man. So tell us more? How will you pay for this place? Where do you want to work? What kind of long term plans do you have for getting a well paid job? Tell us more about this brigher future you hope and pray for.

Life!!

Each day I wake up I say to God, "Thank you for blessing me with another day of life. Even if it has to be in here, in juvie." Because God once said, "Tomorrow is never promised." That's what it say's in the Bible. So each day I am blessed by our father. So people be thankful for what you have in life. At first I wasn't and now I thank him every morning.

-Dice

From The Beat: What you said is true. Are you also saying "thank you" through the way you live? Continue and grow with what you've started doing. Tomorrow may not be promised, but you can do something today to make tomorrow better.

Have You Ever...

Have you ever sat and reminisced on your life?
Have you ever thought back to all the bad things you've done?
Have you thought of the people it affected.

-Lil' Mousie

From The Beat: Have you? How have those thoughts affected you? Does it make you want to do anything differently, possibly? Thinking about something is one thing, doing something because of those thoughts is totally different. Thank you for sharing.

There Are Consequences

Being in the hall has helped me because it made me learn from my mistakes. When I get out I know not to do wrong because there are consequences. And one of those consequences is coming to juvenile hall. Some people say the hall aint nothing. But it is something when you get took away from your family for 6-9 months. Then some ninjas want to cry, but them be the same ninjas that say it ain't nothing. That's why they say if you can't take the heat, stay out the kitchen.

-Rell

From The Beat: Since you're not one of the ones playing the role, and know about the consequences, we hope that you don't do wrong when you get out. 'Cause if not, then that knowledge you have and what you've written, will cause others to say you just playing the role.

Gots The Power

I'm in the world bored as a duck,
Making my money with some tough luck,
Tryna get my car tall as a truck,
I mean hella things tucked in my pockets,
Tryna avoid them bullets hittin' my socket,
Because where I'm from ninjas don't care but you,
Gotta be beast if you hanging out,
Free my ninja hanging in there,
Beast that homie like a bear,
This is all I see,
Lil' Dorsey name going down in history.

-Lil' Dorsey

From The Beat: We had to make some edits to your thoughts so it could get in The Beat. Does it matter to you how your name goes down in history? Is your name going down in history, but you spend the rest of your life behind bars cool? Isn't there another way of making money? What's happening with your car while you're incarcerated? Will it still be there? Is this all you see for yourself?

I Feel Like....

Sometimes I feel like screamin' — "Fuhgit the world!" Behind the cloud tryin' to duck and rise, got my bandana on my head, pants to my feet, got my eyes open and my glock on the seat. Yeah, I'm tryin' to stay under intoxication! Plus I lost my grandpa and got it all. Plus I'm on probation — drinking liquor like it's water, gettin' pissy drunk.

-Lil' B

From The Beat: So you think your grandpa looking down from heaven wants to see you go out like this? Like a drunken lunatic waitin' to get killed or locked away for life, 'cause you're a moving target with no respect for life? We understand your grief, and yes, it's crazy-making. But stop now, 'cause even if your grandpa is dead, you've got his immortal spirit aching and quaking for love of you.

Own New Year's

I'm gonna be out by the time New Year's is here, and I already know what I'm going to do. My New Year's resolution is to step my game up and get my money in all different ways.

And when I'm getting it, all I'm gonna do is stack — I ain't spending no money! Another thing I'm gonna do is stay to myself. I ain't messin' wit' no one but my ninjas that I know, like my ninja Meech (RIP) would've wanted me to do.

-Lil' Cliff

From The Beat: Meech's spirit is now in the bosom of God in heaven, and he looks down with clearer vision than he had on earth with all this confusion and pain. If you pray to hear from Meech in heaven, we're sure you'll hear him telling you to get up out the game before you end up the same. Find yourself some legal shine! Get a j-o-b, so you can stay safe and free.

No Help From the Hall

what can i say
the hall ain't helped me no way
i just sit in my room hella pissed all day
i sit on my slab as hard as it is
ringin' that damn buzzer 'cause i gotta take a whiz
talkin' to the staff, tryin' to get lined up
lookin' like abe lincoln and you know it's lookin' rough

-Marcus

From The Beat: It's no place anyone would want to be, but all that time alone with yourself gives you a chance to think things through so you can see what needs to change. Waste that time just waitin' to get back on the grind, and it's more of the same old same — a set up for more incarcerated pain. (Nice rhymes though, fashow.)

If The World Was A Stage...

I would be the bad guy.
Robbing everybody and getting away with it.
I would be the bad guy at night.
And the wealthiest positive men in the day.
I would help little kids and poor people.
Send money to the third world countries.
But as soon as it got dark.
I was in the kitchen cooking.
I would rob all major dope dealers.
And give to the little ninjas posting on the block for crumbs.

-Willie Boe

From The Beat: Sounds like a Robin Hood type of story. We cut out where you was cooking. Wouldn't there be another bad guy trying to take you out? How long do you think you could lead that double life? A bad guy with a good heart. We think you're better off playing the good guy 'cause the bad guy always gets killed, or locked up.

New Year!

Ain't this about a ...! For the second year in a row, I am spending my Christmas and New Year's, here in the Hall! But I ain't really trippin' 'cause I know I will be getting released soon — and won't be in this joint forever.

-Mackey

From The Beat: The question is: Will you keep going in and out of lock up forever, missing holidays, birthdays, just plain freedom — or are you ready to think about how to stay out now!

Expect to Go to the "Y"

What it do, Beat and Beat readers! This the homeboy, Lil' Shammy from Hayward, just dropping y'all a few lines to let y'all know what's 'hood wit' me.

Well, I go back to court on the eleventh of December for sentencing. I think I'm going to the "Y". But I ain't trippin' 'cause I'm'a keep it solid, and whatever they throw at me, I know I can handle it. So to all, stay up!

-Lil' Shammy

From The Beat: We appreciate your courage, but don't condemn yourself to a lifetime of coming in and out of incarceration. Use your time at the Y to get an education and some job training — then when you're released, make your money legally and stay free!

Too late

Shhh it's never too late to change your ways. No need to rush, you still got your whole life ahead of you so take your time but don't take too long.

-Itchy

From The Beat: That's right—if you take too long it really might be too late. Imagine being in prison for years—what about life? It's hard when you're young to realize that sometimes your actions can have lasting effects, but every inmate on Death Row was young once and thought they had all the time in the world.

Court Day

This ya boy, Lil' Man, coming from the max unit in 150, and I went to court on the twenty-eighth — and I ain't sayin no names, but somebody came to snitch on me. But I ain't mad 'cause I took a deal before he could come in and snitch! But they can't hold this boy down. Y'all know what I am! I'm out.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: Are you sure you aren't letting your imagination run wild? Who knows what they'll tell you to try to get you to cop a plea? It doesn't mean anybody was truly there ready to snitch. And that loose talk can cost lives, so stitch up your own lip. Spend this time figuring how to make a negative into a positive.

Yes!

Yes I think the hall has helped me because when I was on the out I didn't give a shhh about anything. But now that I been in the hall I'm willing to change my life so I don't come back to this place.

-Jesse

From The Beat: We hope you're sincere and willing to do the work to really change things. So many of the writers who talk to us about changing their lives get back out and buckle under the pressure of their old ways. Some really don't come back though, and we hope you make the choice for yourself to be one of those few.

Free

no matter what i do
i feel it's not enough
model i'm built wit' is ford tough
bottled up inside my cell
like shook champagne
bottle ready to bust
for my freedom i'm'a search
like a nympho searching for lust
so if you try to stop it
from where you came you'll return
dust to dust
never blame my game
i'm a beast at the least
i'll smash my squad

-F

From The Beat: Can't give your turf as you name in The Beat, so that only left an F for you signature. As for all your violent talk, that's the opposite of searching for freedom — if you're an enemy of peace, freedom is what you won't be seeing for long. Peace and freedom go arm in arm. Can't keep one without the other. So think about where you want to be: a hospital, jail, graveyard — or free!

What's Really Cuttie?

This yo' boy from Redwood City, and if you still don't know, it's Lil' Gumby. I'm just chillin' up here on my stomping ground, 150 Hall. Tu Sabes? (Ya know?)

Well, I'm currently waiting on a placement to come get me. Hopefully they ship me out close to the bay. Ya feel? Well, I'm signing out. To all on this side of the walls: Stay up, remain solid and keep ya heads up for life. Be a hitter — hit life don't let it hit you!

-Lil' Gumby

From The Beat: Hit the schoolbooks, hit the pavement looking for a job! What does hit life mean? Maybe it means seeing the inside of juvenile hall as your "stomping ground". Seems like your life that's getting stomped. Haven't you had enough? Sorry if we sound hard, but we just hate seeing you live behind bars.

New Year And More

You see, I was in the hall one time before but it was in-n-out. This time it's been days. I figured that living day to day makes your days go faster. Just thinkin' of being the best you can every day and not feeling sorry for yourself, counting the minutes until your release. Having nothing but the basics really makes you appreciate the extra stuff you had on the outside. Just being able to see your female and be with her is such an anticipated moment, whereas before having her was just a repetition, a thing I took for granted.

When I get out, I'll apply my theory about living day to day and being the best I can. I'm already thinking what I'ma buy my little cousins for Christmas. Something just wanna make me be the best cousin, student, son, boyfriend, etc....

-Musvez

From The Beat: Those are good things to strive for and do. If you do your part and do the best you can today and continue it day in and day out. It makes tomorrow and your future a little bit better. Along the way things may not go the way you want it to go, but don't give up and continue with what you believe is right. During this process you'll also be showing your little cousins the way to live life. In turn becoming that "best cousin, student, son, boyfriend, etc."

Off To CYA

G-vole, Beat readers and fellow inmates! This be that homeboy Baby Gesus from Oakland. Yeah, I just got transferred to max since I got sentenced to "CYA" on the twenty-ninth. I'm hella mad, but flunk it, I'm just going to have to ride that shhh out! Tu Sabes!

Man, the judge sentenced me to three years (half of my max)! Well, enough of all that depressing stuff — I'm up here in max savving it out! Hopefully that "YA" bus will come get me ASAP, so I can get up out of here. This Juvenile Hall life gets to your head after awhile, with all these J-cats running around with they' chest out!

Well, I'm 'bout to drop a couple of lines about this hoopty lil' topic. I guess I'm supposed to be writing about some Hurricane Katrina stuff, but I don't really give a what about that noise. I'm more concerned about what's going down in my neck of the woods! You feel me? But anyways, it's about that time for me to cut the string loose on this kite, till next time!

-Baby Gesus

From The Beat: You never have to write on our suggested topics. They're just suggestions. On the other hand, in general, when you learn to start caring about others, you start making better decisions in your own life. Paradoxically, when you start caring about others, your own life gets better. And the more selfish your thinking, the more trouble you bring on yourself. It's not a law or anything like that, but a spiritual paradox that often proves true.

Can't Go Home For 20 Years

I want to get out, so I can be with my family. So I could be there for them when they need me! But I'm not going be there, because I'm going be locked up for more then twenty years in jail ...!

-Lil' Man Man

From The Beat: Expect the worst but hope for the best. Sentencing young men, really juveniles, under eighteen to decades of prison time is wrong on so many levels. Maybe society will wake up and give you a shot at freedom well before this draconian and inhumane sentence. Times change and so does the law, even retroactively.

Listen!

There ain't nothing to say. Just do your time like a "G" and don't mess up when you get out! This is life.

-Lil' Kreepers

From The Beat: We cut more than half your piece that was just repping your gang and your 'hood or varrio. If you really don't want to mess up when you get out, you'll need to think through what your life is really about. 'Cause right now you're volunteering for jails, hospitals and/or death.

Time

What up, Beat! This Dreamer from Hayward. It's been a min' since I wrote to The Beat, but I finished my other program and now it's all good. My homeboy Chino just cut out from Camp a few minutes ago — he hella stupid! But they was tryin' to VOP (violation of probation) him anyway. So, I'm gonna see him this weekend, if they did not catch him already.

Anyways, I'm just doin' this Camp thing. This mess gettin' hella old, but I ain't gonna run. I'm'a just pimp shhh. We 'bout to get extended this week for Christmas — so I'm lookin' forward to that! Hella mess changed on the outs since I been locked up, some for the good and some for the bad.

Man! The sheriff just came up here wit' Chino! So he 'bout to go back to the Hall! Well, Beat, that's all for now. Alrato.

-Dreamer

From The Beat: It's a trip when in the same piece you call how it was stupid for your friend Chino to run, and then he gets caught and brought back to Camp – and now he knows he's going to the Hall. It's like even if you do get VOP'd, you only make it worse by running — especially if you catch another charge out there on the run. So maybe Chino was lucky in a way, getting caught so fast. Well, you're doing better than he is. But if all you do is pimp your time and go right back to banging and slanging on the grind, you pimped yourself by not working on your mind. 'Cause figuring out how to stay free is the key to doing time — and those who think they suddenly can get slicker, just come back quicker.

To My Love

What's up Lil' Baby
I know you my lady
But why is you trippin'
Mayn ain't nobody pimpin'
Mamaz you know I love you
And I also care
Damn, don't it suck that I can't
Hold you like my teddy bear
Do you remember all the joy
Mayn at that time I was yo' boy
Damn it's almost a year
Watch when that day comes,
I'ma be sheddin' tears.
Mamaz I love you to the end
I just can't wait 'till I see you again.

-Mike Jonez

From The Beat: This new poet voice you're finding in your dark days are true proof that a rose truly can grow from concrete, even the concrete walls of a max unit. Keep 'em coming!

Locked UP

Man, they got nearly everyone I kick it wit' in jail now! We need to knock this lil' time out though, so we can bounce back and be back in the 'hood. So to all that's in the Hall: Keep y'all head up.

-Lil' LaRon

From The Beat: Don't just bounce back to the same old! If you keep repeating the same mistakes, you'll keep getting the same bad results. If everybody's locked up, don't you get the message? It's time to change!

Ballin'

What's up wit' it, Beat! This Lil' LaRon once again. Yeah, me and my ninjas stay ballin'. If you slide through the 'hood, all you go' see is a bunch of ballin' ash ninjas. We flippin' big houses — we call it real estate. Ballin'!

-Lil' LaRon

From The Beat: Nah, LaRon, you just told us everybody's locked up. Time to face reality: that was a fool's paradise and it's over. If you try to reclaim it, everything will just keep getting worse. Time to change! Maybe get a real estate license on the real.

New Year, Yeah

for my new year's bash
i want to meet up with all my friends
and get on one, yeah

-Marcqus

From The Beat: Have fun but be safe — all year long!

The Hall Ain't Cool

Juvenile Hall has helped me in two ways: by not getting killed and by going to school.

I got most of my school credits in Juvenile Hall! And when it's hot on the block, I always go to jail — then somebody get' shot and I wasn't there because I was in here, safe.

But this still ain't the place to be. So, if you readin' this — the Hall ain't cool. So stay out ... even if it ain't safe out there.

-Lil' Darnell

From The Beat: You can make your life safer on the outs by staying off the block. Get yourself a legal job. Then when someone gets shot, you'll be at school or at work — so you won't get buried or charged with the murk. And when you get paid, don't take your cash to the block. Keep a low profile, take your lady out in style, and be thankful for what you got.

The New Hall

Man, that new Hall they building up there ain't cool. All that's going to do is get a ninja ready fo' the Y and the Pen'. The food up there is scan'lous. And your parents gotta make an appointment to come visit! That place ain't nothing nice. It should be open, they say, in April 2007.

-Lil' Laron

From The Beat: How do you already know the food is bad? At least, thanks to Books Not Bars, it didn't get built way in Dublin where so many families would have greater difficulty getting to.

Pimpin' Time

What up with it, Beat. This yo' boy Lil' Man Man up and here with my homeboy, just trying to hold it down and keep my head up and do my time and stay away from these suckas. That's all.

-Lil' Man Man

From The Beat: We have to say we hate the word "pimp" not only because of its literal meaning of exploiting women and girls and sex slaves, but also in other contexts where it means to fake it (in your program) till you make it (to freedom), and then do what you always do. It's a formula for short-term success and long-term failure.

On The Battlefront

competition ain't got nothin' fresh
got me bored to death
my flow stronger then ya grandfather's morning breath
on the radio and in the hall
they say they gone hurt each other
stop lying to ya girls
you should learn to love her
you not a killa
plus the dude you tryna go against a fake
next year y'all both be friends on the make
my 'hood where da feds commence
ta kick ya door and have ya tryin'a jump ya own fence
now i'm back 'cause they fiending for another dose
turn it up ninja it's that trav-bo
i bust verbal bullets make 'em scramble for shelter
you got beef wit' me, i got the hamburger helper

-Choyce

From The Beat: Well, you see we changed a few words, 'cause it's not about popping volleys in the street but coming with pure verbal heat that will make you a champion in the pages of The Beat. Still we kept most of what you wrote, but wanted to let you know, it's not about reppin' your block in Beat flow but reppin' your own intelligence. You know?

Something I Didn't Commit

This is Danger. I'm in juvenile hall for something that I didn't commit. I feel like I should say that I plead guilty to get it over with.

-Danger

From The Beat: That's a choice that you've made and hopefully can live with. There's a lesson to be learned in this unfortunate experience. We hope you figure out what it is.

We All We Got

Me and my ninjas stay together. We a' do anything fo' each other. We all solid and we go' stay solid. Like Lil' Purp said, "We all we got."

-Lil' LaRon

From The Beat: So it's time to start helping each other change your life around. 'Cause if you end up in prisons as large as small cities, you won't have each other anymore except in memory.

Blew It

you blew it when you was not down for me
until you seen me get that money
you blew it when them people tried to kill me
and that was when you went running
while you see me out there
ain't going nowhere
i always knew that you was going to be
the person that i was going to have to make be easy
you blew it the day you start showing me all of
them weaknesses so i know that you wasn't cool no
more for me to kick it wit'
because ninjas just think like man these people
ain't real no mo'
you blew it when you stop keeping it real
because that's the real deal and you ninja blew it

-Choyce

From The Beat: We also had to cut much of this piece. It really concerns us when you throw all your progress out the window to write like you're still living in the street ready to repeat every mistake you ever made in the name of the G-code, as you march off to prison. It's like you want to wear God like a pair of gloves you can take off whenever you want to act like a thug. If you only commit halfway to heaven, you're still lost halfway in hell. The test of courage has now changed. Slipping back to your old mean mug is to break weak, 'cause it's recovery you need to maintain now, not the reputation of a hard street thug. What you were is indisputable, but it's time for you to become reputable.

Time Almost Up

What's up, Beat! Time almost up at Camp! In two more months these haters here that talk 'bout how I'm gon' get slapped wit' sixty days, won't have nothin' to say. Meanwhile, I ain't no fish, so I ain't gon' bite! Feel me?

This program here is hella easy, but you got to be a player. Feel me? If y'all come up here, don't run! It ain't worth it. It feel' like I got here yesterday!

-D

From The Beat: We had to abbreviate your name because we don't print turf calls as signatures as a rule. So if you don't like being called D, pick another name. In any event, props on doing a good program. However, if you see yourself as just playing at change, after your release you'll get played again by the game. We're not hating, just stating what we've seen over the years.

New Year's!

Yeah, man, this ya boy Darnell again. Man, I wish I was out for New Year's! I be on one! But man, if you readin' this and you gon' be out for New Year's, on the real — be cool and be safe! 'Cause ninjas be hatin'! So if you my ninja and you readin' this — be cool — and I'll see you soon.

-Lil' Darnell

From The Beat: That's some sage advice, 'cause you can get shot and die while you're out high-profilin' in a G-ride. Your rivals will be out there, too, and in all that chaos, no telling what a fool might do. So thanks for lacing our readers on having a fun and safe New Year's.

When I Get Out of Jail

when i get out of jail i'm gonna
go to school and get a diploma
when i get out of jail
i'm gonna get a job
when i get out of jail
i'm gonna stop taking drugs
when i get out of jail
i'm gonna get all my shhh together

-Going straight

From The Beat: You can get started on all these things while you're in Camp Sweeney. Home visits can test your resolve to remain drug free (alcohol is a drug, too, you know). Some even start part-time employment outside of Camp while they're still here, or at least get that promise of a job upon their release.

To the Other Lil' D

What's up wit' it, my brother from another mother. I know you goin' to that group home. Be cool while you in there. I'm gon' see you in a minute. It's good, brah. Be safe out there. You already know what's up.

-Lil' Darnell

From The Beat: Being safe involves so much more than not getting caught slipping, and part of what it involves is embarking into areas of life and thought that you don't already know — 'cause all you know is what got you and the other Lil' D locked up and might still get you killed.

My Family

Mess wit' the right side 'cause if you mess wit' the wrong side me and my bra's bringing hell. Straight up kid. So don't mess wit' my family and it won't be another statistic. But I don't want to hurt anyone.

-Lil Rony

From The Beat: We understand that sometimes we say all the things that other people want to hear. However, deep down inside we really don't feel that way. That's how your writing/thinking comes across. One day we'll have to stand up and start being leaders instead of followers. Or else we'll just continue to follow those who are leading us down the wrong paths.

My Last Day

What it do Beat! This my last day in the Beat. I thought about my bra and was like keep it lit.

-Lil' Rony

From The Beat: As you can see we took out the RIP. We empathize with you and the family of your lost friend. And we hope that his memory lives on in a more positive note. A loss of a friend or loved one at times can not be explained. But imagine how moving, touching and powerful the piece would be if it was written? In that context we would allow the RIP as an educational tribute.

Next Month Free!

Man, next month I get out of this stupid Camp! That is, hopefully I'll be out. The only problem is that I have no plan for what I'll do when I get out. The only plan I have so far, is to try to finish school — or at least try to get a GED.

So, yeah, I've been up here for six-and-a-half months already! And I already know what's going to happen when I get released — I might mess up for the first two weeks. Then after that, I'll get down to business. And if I do get my GED, I'll try to go to community college.

-Fairlas

From The Beat: Man, we know how smart you are, and we know what you're capable of, which is plenty! So all this talk about "try to" this and "try to" that is hella weak. It's almost like you're saying, "But I won't try as hard as I can." Or, "But if things don't go my way, I'll quit and go back to 'what I do best.'" It's not the people who swear they know they'll make it, do — that's not what we're saying. What we are saying is that you need to make a no-matter-what (NO MATTER WHAT) commitment to not going back to your old life, to being that role model to your little brother you once wrote you want to be — no matter what. If you have that desire and that commitment, you can plan as you go along. If not, you'll get tired of swimming upstream and get swept back into your old ways. Don't manipulate yourself. Get clear! And get a legal way to make your pay. And forget those two weeks of partying, 'cause your weak resolve will dissolve in chemical abuse. Instead put those writing pads we gave you to use — send us daily reports on what you do, and we'll send you The Beat.

If The World Was A Stage

i wouldn't have any rage
i'd go around singing and getting paid
with all my homies in the street like a parade
my life is already like a book
in the hall i just step back and take a look
my dream is i wanna sing y'all know that
it's all good so holla back
praise god up above
i'm out — one love

-Sassy

From The Beat: When you look at your life like an open book, and you feel that somewhere along the way there was a wrong turn you took that put you here, you can give in to despair and fear — or write a better ending through changing the choices in your life that need mending. In every stage play, movie or book, there's always a crisis where the (s)hero feels down and maybe even out, but she stops caving in to fear and doubt, changes what needs to be changed and shows the world what she's about.

The Experience

this is an unforgettable
experience
it started august twenty-fourth
i was released to a group home
and
i ran
i was gone for two months
without a bed
to sleep in
without speaking
to my family
i had to take care of
myself
i never really had to do that
because i could always go home

-Experienced

From The Beat: Live and learn. Many say that experience is the best teacher. Remember though, if you don't learn from the lessons of experience, you condemn yourself to repeat them.

Messed Up On My Home Visit

Wassup wit' it, Beat! This's Tony from Fremont up here at Camp. I just got here from the Hall. I was there since Saturday because I came back on my home visit hella drunk and I couldn't even walk straight! I didn't even check in but just walked into Camp.

I messed up this time — I hope I still get to go home on my normal court date! So I'm just try to talk to my PO and see. And today my homie from the 'hood just ran, and all I could do is just try not to get into anymore trouble. So I'm'a just try to do my program and complete it. I'm out. To all, stay up.

-Tony

From The Beat: As we recall, your homies returned in the back of a police car before our writing workshop ended. We'd guess he was thinking thoughts similar to yours: I messed up; and I hope I still get to go home .... Well, the lesson is there for anyone who reads your piece or this response to it. Feeling an impulse to get drunk and feeling an impulse to run, are both pretty natural to nearly every detainee and camper, but resisting that impulse signals that you're ready to accept the responsibility — first, to do a good program and get a timely release, but also, perhaps, to handle your freedom more responsibly after your release, too. Often we lose the larger lesson by getting caught up in details.

I Am The Great!!!

You countin' seven then I'm countin' eight.
You wanna play then get in the game.
And don't speak on my name!!!

-Jaret

From The Beat: How does this make you great? Maybe you can break it down a little bit more for us? So we can see how you consider yourself great yougnsta, 'cause sitting in jail is a far cry from greatness

I Hope I Don't Run

I'm going on a HV for Christmas, and I hope I don't run — because it's really hard to come back when you wit' your family and your patnas and girls.

I only have twelve hours to stay wit' everybody that I want to be wit'. I'm not going to have enough time to be wit' my girl and wit' my family. That's why I hope I don't run. Don't tell nobody.

-Nacho Cheese

From The Beat: At least already know you'll be tested, so the impulse to run can't take you by surprise. Man, you should've asked Lil' Soldier about his brother, Feebo's story, who ran over Christmas, was it last year? And now he's in the pen'. How much time will you have with your family or girl if that happened to you? Keep it simple. Yo' patnas don't know (or care?) what you really need to do. We hope your girlfriend and your family do, and that they can help you make the right decision. We hope you're back in Camp reading these words, laughing — 'cause you took the right action!

Still Sitting Here

Man was sup Beat, this ya' boy Lil' Glen. Man, as ya'll already know I'm still in these played out halls, still doing dead time man. Not one PO came to see me in the past three weeks, or nothing man. I aint got one interview since I been here, so that's why I say I'm doing dead time. So I'm just 'bout to sit here, feel me, and hold it down like usual.

Dudes been speaking on me lately like they about that action. Well I'm go tell you like this, Lil' Glen about that action, feel me. Still knockin' ninjas down if necessary but I'm go leave it at this, if you hyfee, you might as well stay in the house and stop bangin'.

-Lil' Glen

From The Beat: Maybe you could use this time more constructively. Not to say that you haven't. It's only dead time if you make it that. Does what other dudes think of you really matter? In the past has this helped or hurt you stay out of those played out halls?

New Year

When the New Year come I have a plan for myself. I plan to do right and not get caught up in any trouble on the streets. I know I can do good if I choose to. When I hang out with the wrong crowd they try to lead me into trouble, that's hard to get out of. When I go to school I seem to focus and do what I do.

When I be on the street I kinda' be slippin', not staying on task, not focusing on my life. I be too caught up making money and not watching my back. It ain't that I be slippin' 'cause I keep that thang on me, and that's was up.

-Jakuri

From The Beat: You know what hanging with the wrong crowd and on the streets will get you. You also know what happens when you go to school. Staying on task and staying focused will only strengthen your plan. Keeping that thang means that you're slipping with the law. And that would be going against your plan.

Tryna Do My Program And Get Out ASAP!

Man, I'm tryin' to get to camp ASAP, so I can do a good program and get my home passes fast. Then maybe if I do good enough I can get out before 6 months. Plus if they come get me before Christmas and New Years, I can get a home pass for 5 days for each holiday. I would really like to be with my family for the holidays. So I'm gonna pray to God that they come get me before the holidays.

I hope a lot of other people are praying for me too. Well I know that my mom and dad are praying for me, because they were very hurt that they took me in. But for sure when I get out of camp, I'm gonna change my life around. I hate hurting the people that love me most. Especially my mom and dad.

I hate being locked up having people tell me when to eat and sleep. Having to knock on the door and ask to use the restroom and shower. Man, I hate jail. It's not a place to spend any time of your life in.

-Anthony

From The Beat: You know exactly what you need to do. We believe you can do well and get all the privileges that come with doing what's expected. All that will only make that time go by faster. But don't forget to take advantage of what's offered as well. Like education, or any classes that could help you out. Make this next chance count.

Forget This Camp

forget dis camp stuff man
finally lettin' me out this shhh
goin' a s a p — fast
everybody in the hall be cool

-OBtrice

From The Beat: Ah well, you did your time, but you put in no work on changing your mind — even after sitting in max for minute. How many chances you think you're gonna get? If you already knew how to stay free, you wouldn't have got caught up in it. Then you draw a hand-sign for your 'hood! We wish you the best, but have to confess, it doesn't look good.

Second Chance at Camp

What up, Beat! This Lil' Mess in Camp. I've been here for two months. It's an easy program, but at the same time it gets boring — but then all you got to do is to find something to do and keep right!

I ran from this program before. The judge let me back, so I am here. I got two more months left. For all those people coming to Camp, just finish and go to the house!

-Lil' Mess

From The Beat: Did you run in the first couple of days last time, because you'd already made up your mind to run? If not, what happened? Sounds like you're thinking and seeing straight now though — so "just finish and go to the house!"

To My Ninjas

What's really good? This Lil' Cartier — and this Camp mess not cool! I be feeling like running, but RIP Doobie pimped this, so I got to do it for my ninja!

All my boys in the Hall, I love y'all. I won't be coming home for Christmas, and I need you ninjas up here wit' me — so do a good program in the Hall and don't run when you get to Camp.

-Cartier

From The Beat: We can tell when you're in a bad frame of mind, sometimes from the first words you write. You know our pages are not for you just to write your friends, even if you are writing about not running and trying to stay positive in a negative situation. But pimping your time is not enough, 'cause it means you'll fake it till you make it out the gate — but to take change on the real if you don't want to come back or get yourself killed.

New Year's

What I plan to do for the new year is — work and save up money and stay out of trouble, so I can move out when I turn eighteen next November. Then, when I move out, I'm moving back to my hometown, Modesto.

I'll live there on the west side or the south side deep, wherever I can find a cheap apartment for me and my sister to live together. Then I'll go to school on an independent studies program, so that I can also work and pay the bills. Then, maybe, if everything works out — then, that's all good!

I can't wait to move to Modesto! I also plan to help my best friend out when she has her baby boy.

-Modesto

From The Beat: Is your sister still in Modesto? Or will she move there with you when you turn eighteen? Yeah, it sounds like you miss Modesto, but what does that really mean? You miss family left behind? Friends? Tell us what's waiting in Modesto for you. Meanwhile, major props on your plan! Dreams can come true when you plan it through and do your do.

Camp Pass

This the homie Savage from Berkeley coming at you one time. I been up at Camp for three weeks and it's way better than the Hall! Hopefully, I get to go home for Christmas so I could spend time with the family and go kick it with the homies and go over my lady's house.

-Savage

From The Beat: Thanks for the update, but what's going on in your heart and mind? Just passing time before you go back to the grind? What if you had to choose between family and homies? It's not your family that has you doing time, right?

To All: Do Your Time

What's up wit' it, Beat! This is yo' boy Lil' Ant from Hayward. I want to say what's up to all in the Hall, YA, and in the Pen'. Do y'all time and sav' it out. Today is December the nineteenth, and my homeboy Chino ran 'cause he was 'bout to get sent to the Hall.

To all, do yo' time and stay strong, too. This is Lil' Ant up at Camp. I'm out.

-Lil' Ant

From The Beat: It's a good thing that you're advising people to do their time. Too bad Chino didn't listen, 'cause before the workshop was over that day, he was right outside sitting in the back of a County Sheriff's car. You could say that he was going to the Hall anyway, but for what, a few days? Now he may not get to come back to Camp at all. As for the guys in max', well, they have no choice, so they need to go deeper and use their time in the system to think through the life they've been livin' — 'cause they can come out one day and stay free, or go back to the same old and see years in prison (if they don't get shot to death on a mission first). When will you realize that banging is a curse? Why give your life to a domestic drug cartel? To end up in the system's hell?

Alishia / Timothy

(A)- What's up boy?
(T)- Boy, who you callen boy...
(A)- I miss you sexy
(T)- Ooh, I feel it in my bones
(A)- There you go, I only said sexy
(T)- I know, but it's not what you said it's how you said it.
(A)-What if I called you daddy?
(T)- Hold on now, you know I am in to that wild stuff. So don't get me started.
(A)- Whatever.
(T)- Yeah right, that's what's up.

-Alishia

From The Beat: Ok. Where is this conversation leading? Is there more to this dialogue or is this it? We as readers feel like we're missing something. Unless it's x-rated then The Beat will have to pass on the remainder of your conversation. Thank you for sharing though.

My Patna

Man, they got my patna fo' some serious. I've been prayin' fo' him every night. They tryin' to send my patna away fo' a minute. I hope he get a cool deal. I just want to say I love you bra and just stay solid. Knock that out and I'm gonna hold it down. So keep yo' head up. We all we got.

-Lil' LaRon

From The Beat: Hopefully you can find a more constructive way of holding it down. Are you in there now for trying to hold it down? You have some real sense and we hope that you take advantage of that. Everything that's happening around you may be happening for a reason. Can you think of one besides the obvious?

The Hall

What's up. This is Lil' Mousie! I've learned a lot from the hall! That's don't take freedom for granted! Also to respect moms and the familia (family), because when you on the outs you doin' it big. Just chillin' with some breezy's and smokin'. But once you hit that cell you just think of chillin' at the casa (house) with the familia (family)! Then when you hit the street, you still don't kick it with the familia (family)!

-Lil' Mousie

From The Beat: Most of the time that's what happens. Why do we realize important things while locked up, then do nothing about it once we get the chance? Why do you think we're in such a rush to get back to the life that led us to incarceration? Were we really doing it big? Big compared to who?

To The Homies!

This is Lil' Mousie. I want to just send my up most love and respect to all locked up behind these county walls! Just stay solid. You are all in my prayers. God's with us all. Remember God never said life was going to be easy. He only said it will be worth it!

-Lil' Mousie

From The Beat: That's a good message/ belief to have and share. However, are there some things that you can do to make life a little easier? We know there will be challenges, but why do we sometimes make things on ourselves and others?

Dreamin'

No, my dreams don't teach me nothing about me, because when I dream I don't think about nothing that's going to make me act like everybody else. If I have a dream, that dream is going to help me stand up with all my choices up in the outs. And it's going to help me make better choices to make my family believe in my dreams. If I don't put no effort in it then how could I help other people with their dreams? If I can't stand with my dreams.

I don't know how people have great dreams but they don't follow it. So they just listen to their mind. They like their dreams because sometimes the dreams do come true. And it is a great thing, but that's if you want that dream.

I never had a dream that's going to help me. But if I want a dream, it's going to make me rich and not in jail. That's if I stay out of the streets and away from my homeboys.

-John

From The Beat: Dreams can definitely be tricky. You say that dreams don't teach you anything, but it actually sounds like they've taught you a little something. Dreams can become reality if you take action to make it so.

Locked Within

i'm locked up
no letter from her
call her on the phone
and she lying
why i fail again
every time i trying
i said that when
i got back out then
i wouldn't fail
but i did it again
look — now
i'm writin' my feelin'
to the beat within
i'm a gee, baby, see
my love is a key
and i open it to the beat
i'm gone, lil' walt, baby
so write the beat
i'm in max so
i got to flow
for the readers of the beat

-Lil' Walt

From The Beat: You do flow, that's fashow, but you got to stop livin' that G-life if you want to stay free on the outside. Get yourself some do-right, and you'll stay out there living the good life. You'll stay seeing your girl face to face, not have to phone from this place.

New Year!

this new year
i wanna start anew
i wanna make
every day through life
without having to act crazy
i wanna have it all
i wanna have a good life
not no jail life
not no cell life
all this hurt
plus i'm wasting my life
and i know it ain't right
sometimes i think i'm bad
for my health
but i know i'm not
'cause i'm'a make it to the top
'cause i'm solid as a rock
and that's my new
year's resolution

-Savage

From The Beat: The truth is, there ain't no top, but there's a lot you can have and do if you know when to say stop, I'm through! Yeah, start anew, and everyday work on improving you, not on the inside 'cause there you've already arrived, but your skills at controlling your temper and being able to remember the road to your goals may not be the quickest route to a fast car and pocket full of loot — but where you're going no one can touch your car, your money, your freedom or your life. 'Cause starting this year, you're living your life right! Meanwhile look for progress, not perfection; and keep moving in the right direction.

Once Upon A Time

Just in my room up in 150 Juvenile Hall, thinkin' about all of the girls that a kid had on has line and all the ones who used to love getting in my bed with me. Well, that's just a feeling you will never feel while you up in here.

That is why sometimes I be going crazy, because I really be needin' some of my girls to go to sleep with me, so they can feel me and I can feel them. Just talking through a letter about sex to yo' girl be hard sometimes, because she can be talking about an another ninja she was feeling — but I wouldn't be really mad at her if she did.

If it make that feel right for me and she going to be there for me whether I am in or out, it's good. You feel me? I really can't do much from in here, so I wouldn't be mad. I'm going to have a lot of this saved-up energy for her. Just know that. It's going to be all the right way I'm going to handle her.

That's just something a ninja don't like about jail though, because a ninja like me need his freedom. On the real, I can't be around J-cats for too long!

-Choyce

From The Beat: Yeah, it's hard being locked up with all those others locked up for whatever, everyone getting on everyone else's nerves, ready for a fight to jump off or whatever, usually just stupid talk though. And suddenly you're living like a monk in a cell, as if you took a vow of celibacy to stay pure for God — but you didn't. So those letters from girls are cool to get, and they don't have to be about sex to bring a smile to your face. Be real.

Now I Realize

Juv this time changed me in a way that I thought I would never see. I listen to staff and they tell me that way I'm leading is not the way. I'm going to end up dead or in jail as somebody's B. When I sleep at night that haunts my dreams. The way I was when I was on the outs is unspeakable. Coming in the house when I want. Knowing the pain and struggle that I put her through. Now I realize that's not the life I want to live.

-No Name

From The Beat: That's good that you've come to realize this. You have the power to change this if you choose so. Keep all these thoughts fresh in your mind when you get out. We know you can do it and you've got to believe in yourself.

Old Hall / New Hall

Nope, the Hall ain't nothin' nice! This one ain't, and the new one ... I heard about that one, but it ain't nothin' new — just a seventy-five million dollar same old same. I don't really care about any new Hall, it's still: Don't do the crime, if you can't do the time.

-Lil' Pug

From The Beat: Even if you can do the time, why choose to? Don't do the crime and you won't lose so much time in your young life to staying in a place that ain't nothin' nice. The best view of the new Hall, is never seeing it at all!

Been Locked Up For the Holidays

What's up wit' it! Man, I been gone for hella long. When I get out, man, I ain't coming back — man, this is not the spirit!

I am gon' be in here for Christmas. I might get out before New Year's though. Man, I knew I should have never left where I was, 'cause man I swear it's not worth it. I been locked up for Halloween, in a group home for Thanksgiving, and now I am 'bout to be locked up for Christmas.

-No Name

From The Beat: Was it your group home that you left? And that's why you're back in the Hall now? Or was it your family's home you left in the first place, thinking you were grown and could make it on your own — and you made it here? Last question: What will you need to change to guarantee you don't come back again?

Boo

what's up wit' it boo
you already know who
this is — this the female
that wanna have your kids
and do what's right
this the type
you need in your life
man boo i really miss you
remember all the times we had
when we both was glad
and how we use' to lay in bed
and the heat of our bodies would spread
remember the time when i was locked up
did you say — what
i think you did
but you didn't really have to do it
man boo don't you know that i love you
for you and not for the things you do
and that i would do any- and every- thing for you
that's why i wanna give you my life
and be your wife
i wanna be the female with the crown
and never with the frown
man boo do i really love you
i think i do
how about you

-Mia

From The Beat: The intensity of your love and devotion pours down the page like the power of an ocean, an unstoppable force, a tenderness that will never go of course. And yet, when you're locked up like this, you need to feel that intensity of love and tenderness for yourself — you need to choose to do only things that are good for your health. And when it feels like the whole world's turned against you, you need to be there for you. And when you've learned how to do that, you'll be there whoever is good for you, and that's a fact. And maybe it's your boo, but that's not for us to say. 'Cause only you can answer that. Okay?

Has the Hall Helped You in Any Way?

The Hall helped me to keep not coming back. When I get out I ain't coming back, because this place isn't cool. I miss my family, friends. I planned to go to school and get my education. I hope I could go to college.

-Anthony

From The Beat: College is a good plan. People who go get better jobs, and also tend to travel more and have more life experience... in college you can take classes, not just in regular subjects like math and history and computers, but also crazy stuff like photography, videoproduction, sailing, Arabic, Spanish! Whatever you want to study. So tell us, where do you want to go to school, and what steps are you taking to meet that goal?

Street Life

i'm get high off purp'
and a fifth of private reserve
i'm from the city where
the young ninjas die skinny
i keep work on deck
if you need any
just holla at them boys
'cause they keep plenty
if you follow me
i got the weight of the world
on my shoulders
and i swear it feels like
a thousand boulders
and it's so heavy
but i'm so ready
feels like i was born for this
if not at least i'll die for it
they said i couldn't do it
but i'd still drive forward
the big question is
what can i do for the youth
everybody lie to them
so i tell them the truth
i only got one chance
to get it right
real ninjas don't die
they go to the fed's
fresh out right back
chasing bread
my life so hard
some call us creeps
i was raised by them
that's why i think so street
i got dealt a bad hand
but i played i out
all i know to do my do
and the coupe stay new
and if yo' money right
then the coke is white
mofo's act like
i ain't suppose' to shine
i ain't the one
definitely not the two
the one in the chamber
don't make me aim at you
my mind was made up
when i was on my grind
i love when jezzy say
"to stay on top
lord knows i'm go' try"
i'm here for a moment
lord know i'm go' die
and when i get to hell
lord knows i'm go' fry
woke up this morning
so i'm still alive
just go' keep prayin'
to the day i die

-Aleshia

From The Beat: Sometimes your old mind will swallow you up whole and take total control, telling you that you'll die anyway someday, so it's all okay to chase your pay the same way you did yesterday, when it's not. 'Cause God will watch your back but asks that you watch your feet and direct them up out of the street where gunplay has the final say not about success but just how deep you can sink your feet in that shhh called the street. We don't want to see your picture in the paper with a story 'bout how no one could save her once the bullet hit. If you want to hit the top, change your game, 'cause the street always ends with pain — do you really want to go to prison after CYA? Aleshia, we pray you see your way to break the chain that holds you in a losing game. (But you sure can rhyme, all the same!)

The Hall

the hall the hall
a stressful place
it make me want
to scratch my face
the rooms is small
and i'm hella tall
i don't want to be
in this place at all
the food is wack
and the beds hurt my back
the staff talk smack
so i want to attack
i can't wait to get out
and see my girl
show her my love
and rock her world

-Bryan

From The Beat: So what's your plan to stay out of this place after you get your release? It's no surprise you don't like being here. The question is: What do you need to do in order to guarantee you stay free? And what do you need not to do?

Charlie

Man a ninja tryna knock this lil' time out so I can bounce back. The main thang is so I can pimp this system so I can be Charlie again. Because that's the best way for a ninja in life.

-Lil' LaRon

From The Beat: We don't know much about Charlie, but can only hope he's not the reason why you're in there in the first place. Multiple personality speaking that is.

Dream

I had a dream where I'm flying and I'm following my footsteps, seeing all the stupid things.

-No Name

From The Beat: That dream could be called a realization. What thoughts come to mind from that dream? Are you willing to take action towards those thoughts?

The New Year

for the new year i will
want to have a better lifestyle
and go home to my family
and take care of them
and i don't want to
commit no more crime
and go to prison
that lifestyle is not the spirit

-Young Boy

From The Beat: May your new year's resolutions all come true. But in the end, it's all up to you, what you choose to do (and not to do).

Nothing Changes

It don't really matter to me that it's a new year, because everythang is the same, ain't nothin' too much changing. People still come to jail and get out of jail. Still shooting, killing, snitching and everything that was going on before.... and nothing really different from the old year.

-Marcus

From the Beat: The outside world doesn't much change, at least not unless people grab it by the throat and force it to change. The only thing we as individuals can really control is whether or not WE change. Is there anything in your life you'd like to see being different in 2007. You can't control the shooting, but you can do a lot to control whether or not you will be in the line of fire!

My People

my people, you messin' wit' fire-ant
you catch me in that fire thang with twenty-inch
tired up, television wired up
holla back i'm like mike
i ball but i don't play, get dough all day, but i won't say
to the dude that first showed me the way
i love you to this day
'cause you made me a hustler
'cause i got to get paid one way or 'nother
i got to get new blades for the summer
and i got to get the mercedes that fade for the hummer
made back eight back, age is a number
and how we ball playa you don't know another
you see the kid ball hard honey
my pocket pudge, my money so tall i look up to my money

-Ant

From The Beat: How much money are you making locked up in the Hall? And this is just a kiddieland taste of what's to follow. You need to figure out another hustle for your pay, 'cause this way will have you dead or in prison one day. What good's a Mercedes on the out when you're locked so deep inside no one can hear you shout what all you own and what you used to be about. You're thanking the man who got you locked up — yeah, you only got caught for trivial stuff, but you know that's just luck. Change your hustle before you get stuck.

Her Jeans

When she walks into a room, all heads turn in her direction. Her jeans define what is all woman, 36, 24, 38 is more than a perfect shape. Baby Phat jeans fit her so well, how her behind pooks out just the way I like it. Apple bottoms bring out the true shape of her beautiful frame, and every time she goes out in public everybody wants to know her name, but she's my girl, my world and everything in those jeans belongs to me.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: If you can write such great prose and imagery out of that one body part, just imagine the lyricism which might be inspired by the inspiration of her heart, her mind, and her soul!!!

Change

I think the hall has changed me. My mind made me think different. It made me realize that I got to change what I'm doing. If I keep doing what I do it's gonna keep me in this place. The hall is making me change because it makes me wanna change, so I won't be in this place.

It makes me wanna go crazy being in the room doing nothing being hella bored. I think a lot and it makes me wanna change so I won't be in this place. So it's helping me see what I have to stop doin' and get my stuff straight, and stop doing what I have no business doing.

-Jordan

From The Beat: The hall can have that effect if the individual is willing. Hopefully all that you've realized will be fresh on your mind once you're released. Because that's where you'll really be tested in all areas. Just remember the thoughts and feelings of being inside once you're free. You'll have that opportunity, it's up to you to take advantage of that opportunity.

How Much Jail Sucks

Jail sucks. It's really boring. All we do is sleep, eat, and go to school. You stay in a small dirty shhh hole (room) for endless hours. It sucks, you will regret it if you ever come. The things I hate the most is the bed. It's just a little thing laid over a counter. I could never fall asleep on it. All I can say is that.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: We hope that it sucks so bad that you won't ever come back. Thanks for sharing your feelings about the place.

Wait For Me

Girl, you and I just met a minute ago. And it's been a few months since I really just seen yo' face in person, but now the only time I see it is when I sleep and dream. I get mad 'cause before I got rapped up in my own shih, I didn't even have the chance to ask you can it be me! The one calling you baby and you calling me yo' man, and one day you probably become ma baby momma and even my wife.

But now I know I can't 'cause I'm stuck in hell! I ain't trippin' at all though, 'cause I'm be home soon, and the only thing I'ma ask is will you wait for me.

-Macky-O Unit 6

From The Beat: Well, it would be nice if she does wait for you. But in a way, you made the choice to leave her by giving the system the power it needed to take you away from her. It's only after you got rapped that you remembered her and staying with her... So, if she does wait for you, consider it a true gift.

Regrets

I have taken a lot of things for granted, like my freedom, because I thought it was cool to commit crimes. Now I'm in jail and that is the reason why. I took my freedom for granted.

Another thing I took for granted is my mom and dad because I let them down by coming in here. Now I regret what I did because now I miss my family, 'specially my mom and dad so much. I wish I could get released already because when I sit in my room, I think about my family and how much I miss them.

I pray every night that Jesus blesses my family and watches over me in these days of struggle and pain.

-Ben Unit 6

From The Beat: The regret you feel is only useful if it guides your future in a different direction. Yes, you let down your parents and, no doubt, they are disappointed. But even more important, you let yourself down. When you pray to Jesus, is it a one-way prayer asking Him to help you, or does Jesus expect something from you, too? Are you giving it?

Keeping Yo' Head Up

Living my life up in this YGC life been very hard. It's my third time in this stupid place for making bad choices and it's time to change my life around and start doing the right thing. I been eating this nasty food and stuck in this 10 by 8 box thinking like, "Dang, I'm back again!"

To keep it real, I just been stressing and most of all keeping my head up and praying. If you been through what I have, the most thing you can do is take this time and think hard about the things you did and the people you hurt.

But still you telling them to keep they head up the people you love and you can just do the same. So if you out there stressing and thinking 'bout what you did, just keep yo' head up and stay strong.

-Lil' Mmo Unit 6

From The Beat: Yes, it's time for you to make those changes you know you have to make — or face coming back a fourth, fifth or sixth time. Thinking about the things you've done and the people you've hurt is a very good place to start making those changes. Changing isn't easy, but unless you do it, you'll be spending large chunks of time under the control of strangers — and that's not easy, either!

My Dreams Give Me Ideas About My Future

No, my dreams don't teach me about myself. My dreams give me an idea how I can make it in the future.

My dream's are to make me successful in life. I will have no chance to become them things. Reason why I say that is I already made my mind up a year ago--what I want to be and how it's going to make me successful. But it really didn't make me successful; it made me get more violent and a victim to more murder. More ninjas want to kill me. As long as I'm living in my hood, murder's going to exist 'till I end this beef stuff. When that happens, then I can think about being successful. Real talk.

-Babie LCRS

From The Beat: What have your dreams revealed to you about how you could become successful in life? What did you try already, that didn't work out? When you made up your mind a year ago about your life, what did you decide? Are your dreams trying to help you get out of living the dangerous life you describe, with your enemies trying to kill you? What is your role in the beef? What can you do to get yourself out of the mess in the streets, and keep yourself safe and alive? If you were to become one of those sad statistics, would it have been worth it?

Two Weeks Left

What it do, Beat? This yo' boy, Domo. I just wanna tell y'all if you coming to the Ranch, to just do the time, don't let the time do you. When you come, don't let these ninjas get to yo' head. 'Cause all these ninjas do is talk to talk, but never walk the walk.

But all I'm telling y'all is if you coming, try to do right. Don't let ninjas get to you. 'Cause all ninjas do is talk and ain't about nothing.

But me, it was lightweight hard for yo' boy when I first came. 'Cause ninjas stay talking mess every day. First it was getting to my head, but then I thought about it. Like I ain't 'bout to let these ninjas keep me from going home. I started ignoring ninjas. Letting them get they last little words off they chest, you feel me?

Now yo' boy only got two weeks left, you dig? 'Bout to touchdown. But y'all on lockdown, keep yo' heads up.

-Domo LCRS

From The Beat: Many of you complain about everybody talking. What is the cause, of all the trash talking? This isn't basketball. What would be your solution to get folks to focus on their own shhh?

My Country

El Salvador is where I'm from.
For El Salvador is for what I die.
That big family, that real family.
The ones that's never gonna let you down.
The ones that love you.
The ones that respect you.

-Playboy LCRS

From The Beat: We had to cut the rest of your poem but it's wonderful that you have so much love for your home country. What about your mother? What about your sister and aunts? Why die for a country you no longer live in? Makes very little sense, unless it is all about your gang, and that's very sad. Can you write what growing up in El Salvador taught you, that is positive? Can you create a life for yourselves up here and give up the violence? How can you give and get respect without threatening anyone, including your own life and safety?

New Year To Me

What's up to all the family we got? You know this Playboy coming from the Ranch. You know, killing this little time like a G. You already know how we get down.

New Years is coming but I'm still here doing this tiempo (time). 'Cause I'm a G and I represent 'till I die. But it's all good. Next year I'll be with my mom and my family.

But then I'm gonna go with the homies to get drunk with some pretty jainas. For now I just got more time here, but it's all good. I do it like a G.

-Playboy LCRS

From The Beat: Pretty soon you'll have your program completed and be home, so that's all good. But we worry when you write that you intend to represent 'til you die. You've never written anything about getting out of the gang, or the game. Why don't you take the possibility of dying in the streets seriously? You know enough about the streets to know they can suck you in, and suck the young life out of you forever. Wise up !!

You Blew It

There was a girl I asked out but she blew it by saying no. She knows I have a girl and she's 22. Wow! How does that make a difference? In here eyes she probably wants me as her only man, but in my eyes I give every pretty female or whenever they called themselves a chance. Why not? She could have had a good time, enjoy the ride and keep this dimples.

-Jason Unit 6

From The Beat: As long as you're honest with the girls (and women) who want to be with you, why not give them all a chance? So, are you honest with them?

My Struggles In Life

I grew up in Oakland wit' my lil' bra and my big bra punkin' in 6th grade. I moved to San Francisco wit' my family, but my big bra stayed in the town. In the last past year, I lost two friends that's really close to me. I lost my grandmother in the fifth grade.

When I lost these three people, I felt like my life was over. But I had to snap out of it and catch myself before I do the wrong thing. But I guess it's too late now. I'm in the hall in San Francisco.

For all you youngstas that think the hall's cool, I advise you not to come this way. It's ugly up here, on mamas. I gotta bounce.

-Askari Da Village Kid Unit 6

From The Beat: Of course it's not too late. It's only too late when you're six feet under. You didn't make the changes you needed to make in your life, and now you're here. That's a lesson — but only if you learn it. If you go out and do the same as before, then you learned nothing, and you can expect more lessons to come. We hope that won't be necessary.

Taking For Granted

Well, there was a time I was in juvenile hall for a big house lick which I got caught a week after, and they switched my county from SF to Contra Costa and I did a month in jail. So I finally got out on house arrest, which I did about three months, got off and doing good in school.

Then I got off everything, started back in the 'hood doing me, blowin' to my pockets, got hurt, then violent. Caught a warrant and was on the run for like four months straight. Then caught another case on some resisting arrest, and now I'm locked up doing more time. But what I'm saying is that I took that good life for granted by BSing around, and now I'm paying for it big time.

-Yung J Pitt Unit 6

From The Beat: So, why did you go back to the block after getting off all paper? Did you think this time you could get away with what you couldn't get away with last time? If so, we hope you've learned that you "doing you" leads to the system doing you... and that's not going to change unless you do!

I Didn't Think

When I really blew it was this time 'cause I'm here for some stupid things I did. It was really stupid. But when I did this I didn't think I was coming here. Now I realize that this two months are already gone, and I lost my time and I'm not getting it back.

-Victor Unit 6

From The Beat: How would you be using your time if you hadn't lost it to the system? If you don't use your time productively, then does it matter if you're wasting it in here or wasting it out there? What did you think the consequences would be for doing something "really stupid" — or did you think you could escape all consequences? Has being here changed that thinking? We hope so!

Db's Plan

TBW: The other day, during your interview, you started talking about thinking about working in porn movies. But then you said you believed in monogamy. So you probably wouldn't end up working in porn movies after all. Do you still want to work in those movies?
DB: No. I'm thinking about being an armed bodyguard.
TBW: Do you mean, like in security?
DB: No, like being a bodyguard for a celebrity.
TBW: Do you mean, like working for a boxer like Mike Tyson?
DB: Yeah, like a famous rapper.
TBW: Who do you respect enough to want to work for?
DB: Young Jeezy or Rick Ross.
TBW: Are they in LA?
DB: Young Jeezy from Georgia, Rick Ross from Miami.
TBW: Do you think it's pretty dangerous to work for a rapper? What about the bodyguards that worked for Tupac and Biggie Smalls? Whether or not they ever got hurt, or killed, their bosses were shot. They were constantly in the presence of their bosses' enemies.
DB: Nah. Those two were way overblown. Most rappers, they really don't go nowhere. They got crazy fans, like Snoop Dog. I just want to be a bodyguard in case someone was to approach the person I'm a bodyguard for. I'll pull out my weapon and protect him.
TBW: Do you need any special training to become a bodyguard?
DB: You just gotta know how to use a weapon.

-Db LCRS

From The Beat: It sounds like you've got a real plan, DB. You can use your skills, enhance your interests, enjoy the show and still stay legal and safe, if you're really careful. We just hope whomever you work for, doesn't have jealous ladies, nut fans or underground hustlas following him. But if he does and the firepower is on, what would you do? How much of your own life are you willing to risk to protect his? If someone attacks your boss, will you throw your body in front of his as a target, duck and/or run? The career you're considering may be 24-7 dangerous. We wish you all the luck.

My Dreams Of Sex And Violence

My dream's is all about sex and violence, for real. 'Cause when I'm in jail, that's all I think about. 'Cause it ain't nothin' else to think about, for real. But then again, whatever I'm thinking about before I go to sleep, then that's what I dream about. Ya feel me?

-Young Jeff LCRS

From The Beat: Does the violence part of your dreams wreck them, turning them into nightmares? Does it somehow appeal to you? Or is it just a normal part of your dreams? What role does violence play in your real life? How do you deal with it in your dreams and also in your life?

About To Make Major Changes

I don't really know what to say! I had made many mistakes, but this time it really serious and I regret what I did. I was supposed to spend my Thanksgiving with my family and I blew it. When I get out, I am going to make major changes for myself.

-Michael Unit 6

From The Beat: Can you give us some examples of the "major changes" you're planning to make in your life? What makes you want to make these changes now when you have not made them before?

New Year '07

2007 coming up and I hope it's gonna be a better year. I'm tired of doing things I regret, then end up getting locked up. So that's why I wanna make 2007 better. When I get out I'm a try to stay off drugs and go to school. And I'm a kick it wit' the family instead of always being out wit' the homies. I'm a try to get a job I can maintain and stay home a lot so my money stacks up. Then I can get my ride and 2007 will be a better year.

-Forgot To Sign LCRS

From The Beat: Sounds like good thinking and you've come up with a plan. What kind of work do you hope to find? Do you need any special education, experiences or training for it? Do you have what will be required of you to get that job, or can you get what you'll need? Don't get discouraged. Even if your new job doesn't pay a whole lot at first, if you do well you can get promoted, work longer hours and get a raise in salary! Good luck!

New People At The Ranch—Better Stay Humble

Man, people think they are so sick up at Log Cabin Ranch, but they are not. 'Cause me and my friends is running this up here. So all you new people that come to the Ranch, better not come doing stuff, you know?

-Lil' Valley LCRS

From The Beat: You're good at helping new people get oriented down at the Ranch. You're kind-hearted, funny, and if someone doesn't have an attitude toward you, you're cool with him/her. What advice would you give someone who has just come down to the Ranch for the first time? Especially if they're lonely or scared?

Staying Strong Down At The Ranch

What it do, Beat? It's Moe Beezy, holdin' it down here at the Ranch. Doin' my program, about to go home in a few months. Man, it's a lot of haters here at the Ranch. But you gotta be bigger and walk away from the situation if you wanna go home and be free man, ya dig?

But to all my homies in the halls—hold it down an go knock that time out and come see a ninja in the good life. Because I'm gone further when I get out, ya dig? But I'm out. Gotta knock this time out, ya dig? Stay focused. Let's get it. Moe Beezy out.

-Moe Beezy LCRS

From The Beat: You're smart to stay strong, quiet, and just do your program and go home. You must see some of the guys spend long months of dead time down there for fighting, mouthing off, etc. But when you write about the good life you have planned, we want to know how you intend to create that good life without doing anything that can threaten your newly found freedom on the outs?

Jason's Thoughts

TBW: Today you said you want to be interviewed about how being at the Ranch has influenced you, right, Jason?
J: Yeah.
TBW: That's a great idea. Has being down here helped you in any way? Has it hurt you? How else has it affected you?
J: It's helped me. The teachers motivated me by wanting me to go to college.
TBW: So they encourage you to go to college?
J: Yes.
TBW: Have you finished high school?
J: Not yet. I wanna get my diploma.
TBW: Will you get it down here?
J: Yes, in seven months I'll get it.
TBW: Where do you hope to go to college?
J: Skyline. I want to study to be a mechanic.
TBW: What do you like about mechanics?
J: Cars. I like soupin' up, detailing cars.
TBW: Do you want to learn how to fix cars when they break down?
J: I want to start my own garage and turn it into a chop shop. A paint shop.
TBW: What is a chop shop?
J: It's when I have someone steal a car and bring 'em to my shop. Strip 'em and put the stolen car parts on another car.
TBW: Jason, you know that isn't cool. It's Illegal. Have you ever been to a chop shop?
J: No.
TBW: You also want to have a paint shop?
J: Yes. All my friends are interested in cars and I can hire them.
TBW: Are they willing to go to jail if all of you get busted for stealing cars and reselling them?
J: No. Maybe. Yes. No. I don't know. I guess so.
TBW: Are you willing to risk your own freedom and threaten your friends? With heavy jail time if they and you get busted for car theft, fraud, whatever other charges they're gonna bring down on you?
J: Yes. No. I don't know. It's really on them if they want to do it.
TBW: But you're willing to put them out there and threaten their freedom?
J: No. Yes. Sure. It's on them. I don't know.
TBW: Maybe you'd better think about it now. Come up with another plan for your chop shop. What else do you want to study in college?
J: Philosophy. I've had a lot of time to think down here at the Ranch. I got motivated to study philosophy in the halls, too. There are finer things on the outs than doing crimes.
TBW: Wow! You go! Like what?
J: My education. It just came to my mind to do good.
TBW: What kind of "doing good" do you want to do in the world? What do you mean by "doing good"?
J: Stay out of the gang life. But I still have the feeling I might go out and do something dumb—that's why I want to use these seven months to help me become a better person.
TBW: What dumb things might tempt you to do them?
J: My friends.
TBW: So you're going to stay away from your friends when you're free again? Or can you hang with them and even if they want to do something that could get them in trouble, can you keep yourself out of it?
J: If I don't look for them (my friends,) they're gonna look for me.
TBW: So it's going to be completely on you to resist getting into any mess again, when you go home?
J: Yes.
TBW: Can you do it?
J: To be honest, I don't know? I hope so.
TBW: So do we. You deserve a lot of credit for trying. We wish you all the strength you'll need to keep yourself cool, when you're free again!

-Jason LCRS

From The Beat: You have a lot of wonderful things in mind for your future. But what about what you've written about wanting to open a chop shop so you can hire your friends? That's a great example of a stupid idea! First of all, why do you deserve anybody else's car, that the owner may have worked years to be able to buy? How would you feel if someone stole your car? Why would you want to threaten you and your friend's freedom by hiring them to steal cars? Anyone who buys your cars with the new radio, CD player, whatever that came from stolen cars, gets implicated in your scheme by receiving stolen merchandise. Is there any way you can open a garage that fixes engines, puts in new brakes, changes oil, puts in new radiators, on new tires, etc? Other than creating an illegal chop shop, great luck on all your endeavors and waking up before it's too late.

Getting Out

Hey, Beat, this Domo, straight outta LCRS, reppin' two thumbs up, you feel me? Yo' boy kind of juiced right now, 'cause I'm a outta here, you feel me? It was kinda hard up in here on a ninja, 'cause a ninja could catch time for any little thing, you feel me? But I'm getting through it.

But my advice for whoever coming to LCR is--do good and do the time--don't let the time do you, you feel me? I ain't going to lie--when you come, it's going to be a lot of ninjas talking shhh, but you can't let that shhh get to you, 'cause that's when you start messing up, letting these ninjas get to yo' head, 'cause that's all ninjas do is talk shhh. They want you to stay with them long, 'cause they ain't never leaving you.

-Domo, LCRS

From The Beat: It's good that you've learned to pretty much stay to yourself and stay out of anyone else's business. That's good advice to anyone coming to the Ranch, and for everybody else in the real world.

When I Look Into Your Eyes

You know how you can tell if someone is lyin'? By lookin' them in the eyes. Well, most people don't. I don't know why, but the eyes are the soul of the body. Just like you know when you're in love. You never know it's there until you look that girl or boy in their eyes. Then you realize that both of your souls are connected though your eyes. So always be real and keep a straight face, 'cause a lie can be noticed and the love is always there.

-Macky-O B4

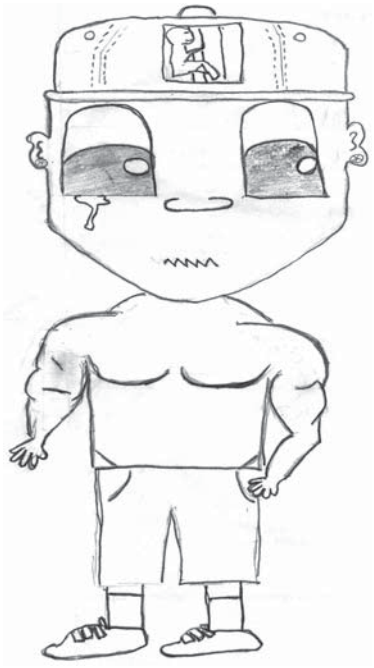
From The Beat: Can you ever be deceived by what you see in someone's eyes?

I'm Getting More Skills

Man, I'm here in The Beat writin' this paper. But man, these days here are stressful and I can't wait to get further. I gotta handle my business when I touch down. As I'm locked up, I'm getting a lot of thoughts in and I'm getting more skills this time, as an advantage for the future. When I touch down I gotta change my ways, get further and do something with my life. I'm a always hold myself down. I will go back into old ways if a ninja try to test me. Get out of line, he gotta get dealt with. But I'm out. Let's get.

-Moe Beezy LCRS

From The Beat: You're faced with the same potential mess as every other guy down in life. And that's what to do if someone tries to get in your face and challenge you. Some have already decided that no matter what mess jumps off, they're going to walk away. They are smart to do that and not lose their dignity. Can you walk away no matter what crazy stuff gets said to you?



People Cool, But We Still Have To Keep Them In Check

My peoples up at the Ranch is cool, but we have to keep people in check here, you know.

-Lil' Valley LCR

From The Beat: You sound like you're learning to keep yourself in check, too. Why worry about others? Focus on you!

You Blew It

I have taken for granted my lifestyle and my freedom. When I am not with my father and miss the action and the fun. I can have money when I get out and go to the group home and finish the program and get the little job.

-Jamar Unit 4

From The Beat: We had a lot of trouble trying to read your handwriting and words, so we had to drop the last sentence. Sorry. Next time, we hope you take a little more time to think and write.

How To Stat Out Of Trouble

I always wanted to learn about how to stay out of trouble and never come to tha halls, but I'm here and it ain't nothing I can do.

-Lil' D Unit 4

From The Beat: There may be nothing you can do about being here now, but there's plenty you can do about not coming back. What do you need to "learn" to stay out of trouble? You already know what put you here, so you should already have learned what you need to stop doing in order to stay out of here.

Falling...

Falling into you
Loving all that you do
Your every last move
The scent of you, too
Yes, you are my high
It just has to be right
Can't explain how I'm feeling
As I fall into you
I'm in love with you
Yes, I'm in love with you boo.

-I Luv It GU

From The Beat: We know the feeling of euphoria that your love is bringing you. But we also know that feeling doesn't last for long, and that the real work of love is a day-to-day kind of business. How will the two of you work through those issues that will hurt or cause disputes? If you don't think those times will ever come, you won't be prepared to deal with them when they do. Good luck.

I wish I could get out of here and touch down to my family.

My Wife

Man, I gotta good girl at the house, holdin' yo' boy Moe Beezy down. When I get out, me and her goin' further with this. My wife is something special to me. I've been with her for about three and a half years. I have been doin' hella things to lose her, but she stuck with me through thick and thin. And now I'm older I see that I have something that most younger people don't have, and I'm a hold on to that. Let's get. We gone.

-Moe Beezy LCRS

From The Beat: You're a lucky man. She must be a strong and patient lady to be living her life with you in some mess, incarcerated and gone away from her for so long. What can you do, when you're free again, to make things right with her?

Me On Me

Me, I am good
Me, I am bad
Me, I am happy
Me, I am sad
Me, I am different
As most people see
I watch cartoons
While you watch BET
I am just me
And I am so proud to be

-Michael Unit 3

From The Beat: Nice poem, Michael. It really captures most of us — combinations of good and bad, happy and sad. What are you most proud of about yourself? What do you have to do when you're on the outs to maintain that sense of pride by maintaining the reality of freedom?

Let's Get It

The reason why I say, "Let's get it" is because I used to get a lot of things I wanted from people. But man, all that got me to be a beast. I wish I could get out of here and touch down to my family. But man, I'm holdin' it down, doin' my program.

-Stub Ant And Moe Beezy LCR

From The Beat: Now that you've stopped harming people when you want something from someone—how do you approach them? How about asking nicely for it? How about giving the person an honest chance to think about it and answer yes, or no, as it serves him/her? What other powers of persuasion do you have? Humor? Charm? You should never have to bully anybody. You're learning a lot in your young life, Moe Beezy. You go!

How To Tell Somebody You Love Them

How to tell somebody you love them? Well you can say you love them but you got to mean it. Sometimes people say they love you, but it just to make you feel good. But I can say some of them can get you so emotional if they say that.

But I'm out. Stay down and get out and stay out

-Flat Head Unit 6

From The Beat: You really ARE out, Connie. We already miss you in the unit, and hope you are doing well in placement!

I Blew It

The person I took granted is my mom and dad. I really disappointed them for doing what I'm doing. But I promise I'll change...

-Notorious MK Unit 4

From The Beat: We're happy that you are making this promise to change, Michael, but the true test is not the words you write or speak, but the actions you do. Don't disappoint yourself.

Fed Up

What's good, B?
This baby fed up in MCJH (Marin County Juvenile Hall)
Posted like a mailbox
Waitin' to see
If they about to send me
To placement
They steady tryin' to play me
Keep movin' my court date
I'm hella heated.

-Baby Face

From The Beat: It is frustrating to be doing dead time in juvy, Baby Face. How do you feel about going to placement? Do you know where you'll be going? Is there a chance you'll be able to go home? Can you read? Hang with your friends in juvy? Draw? While you're in juvy, you might as well learn and enjoy whatever and whomever you can, just like you could in any situation. We hope, if you go to placement, you'll be okay and even have some fun there.

Independence

I am about to get off probation and go to the community college, and that will be the most independence I have ever had.

¬-Mic

From The Beat: Sounds good. Are you ready for college? We hope your college life will expose you to a whole new world. Great luck to you!

This I Believe!

I believe in karma! If you do something, then you better believe it will come back around and bite you.

-James

From The Beat: Has it happened to you yet? Have you've done something that was done back to you? What?

For You Only

(Hook)
This is for you only
When I'm not with you, I'm lonely
I can't wait to see you
Baby, you're my first and only
(2xs)
(Verse 1)
If you and I
Take things nice and slow
Baby, like you're ready
And I'm ready to settle down
On nice things
You're my first; you're my last
You're my everything
You're my cure
For what brings me pain.

-Eli

From The Beat: Sweet love song, Eli. For whom did you write this? This lady sounds like a lovely person. Is she waiting for you on the outs? If you have such a wonderful lady in your life, why are you risking losing her by messing up, getting arrested and going to juvy?

Hard To Keep My Head Up

Keep your heads up. Right now it's hard for me to. You know they tryin' to send me to placement and I'm young. But you know how Speedy L's says—ever since I was young, I was gang-related, but you know it's nothing to a boss. From a young homeboy in San Rafael.

-Marcos

From The Beat: Since you're in a gang, do you think maybe you'd be better off out of it? When you go to placement, it's likely that your homeboys won't be anywhere around. Maybe it will be good for you to see how you make it pretty much on your own. Does your gang get you in trouble? Support you while you're in juvy? If you choose to get out for whatever reason, can you?

What It Do?

I'm hella pissed! I hate boys! Actually, I love boys, but they stay being hella dirty to me. I'm gettin' played too much! Boys stay thinkin' they can walk all over me, and tell me what to do! But they must be trippin' if they gonna treat me like that and keep me around. Screw that. I'm out of this relationship.

-Anti-Square

From The Beat: Unfortunately, many teenage girls and boys experiment with how they treat people. They are testing their powers, personality, sex appeal, humor, attractiveness, their affects on others, and that can include playing people. Being played can hurt enormously. You're right to stand up to anyone disrespecting you and move on! You go, girl!

Worst Place Drugs Took Me

I was thizzin' and drunk and laced the females, and I got caught by my girl.

-Mic

From The Beat: Did you learn a lesson? What? Did your girl forgive you or leave you for messing with other young women? Regardless, how do you feel about disrespecting her?

My Life

Sitting at a table, stressed like hell
Committing crimes, making my stress hate jail
Smoking grape, you know, things like that
When the cops had me
Where did yadayamean have my back?
Now in the hall, got twenty more days
When I get out
Not going back to the same old ways.

-Jayleon

From The Beat: We hope you mean it when you say you're not going back to your old ways. What's causing all your stress? Does smoking weed and going to juvy just make that stress worse? Will you have the same stress when you're out again? What will help you deal with it?

Drugs Have Taken Me Nowhere

The worst place drugs have ever taken me is nowhere, really.
When I used to smoke a lot of weed, I wouldn't really do much.
Every time I would get high with one of my homeboys, we couldn't really do much.
I would feel little buzz, but nothing else.
People always say that weed makes you so high that you start laughing a lot and makes you hungry;
well, to me, getting high never really got me hungry or made me laugh.
A lot of people say it hella messes you up, but to me, it doesn't do much.

-Oscar

From The Beat: Maybe that's good that weed doesn't affect you much. So why do you smoke it? Why are you wasting your time and money on it? It sounds like weed just makes you blah. Does weed have anything to do with your being in juvy? What else do you do for fun, besides smoking weed? Play sports? Walk on the beach? Explore the woods? How can you build up a life that gets you outside and into the world? A life that makes you hungry for more and gets you to laugh?

Life

How is life treatin' you? Real good? You need to change your life so people could understand, 'cause ninjas don't know how it is to starve out here in these streets. Life is real, 'cause Gs need love, too.

-Forgot To Sign

From The Beat: Whom are you writing this to? Are you including yourself when you give this very good advice about changing your life?

Juvy—The Loneliest Place In The World

The places that drugs take me is the place I always feared, jail. It's the most cold, loneliest place in the world. Drugs like weed make me feel good, but when I get locked up while under the influence, it sucks. 'Cause it makes me think about what's going on. Drugs will never help me or anyone.

-Chris

From The Beat: Do you like to live that type of life? Why risk your life for something that isn't worth it? How can we explain it to you? Why throw all your life away for the same sad ending, the halls? Are you tired of it? Are you? Then, when will you stop?

Every time I would get high with one of my homeboys, we couldn't really do much.

Juvy's The Worst Place Drugs Have Taken Me

The worst place drugs have ever taken me is here. Incarcerated is where drugs have taken me. I can't wait to get out. From the age of nine, I've smoked weed. But after a while, that wasn't enough. So I did a lil' pow wow and popped every here and there.

-K

From The Beat: What are you going to do after realizing this? Check this out bro', you don't like being here, but you like to get high. Those two things will always come together. In order to get rid of one, you have to get rid of both. So, what's your decision?

I Almost Got Hit By A Car When I Was Stoned

The worst places drugs have ever taken me was almost getting hit by a car. I was so high I didn't know when to stop. When I got high for the first time, I committed a crime and I had a permanent smile.

-Jamal

From The Beat: Lucky you! This shows that life has given you another chance to live it as you are supposed to live it. Don't waste it. You don't need to loose a leg, an arm, or the ability to move in order to stop getting high, or learning an experience that will lead you to stop doing what you're doing. Avoid something like this from happening.

Connection

Disconnected: why am I disconnected from my fatha
Why am I disconnected from my motha
Is it because I was bad
Is it because they didn't want me
Well guess what... I ain't mad
So don't be sad dat I ain't with ya
Ya gotta remember dat I will always love ya
Ya gotta give me a chance to get my life together
So you will be happy dat our family back together and betta
One thang, I gotta find a new man so I won't be bad again

-Oriana

From The Beat: We hope you learn some valuable lessons about why you do what you do, Oriana, and a strategy for traveling a different path. No man (and no woman) can keep you from being "bad" again. That is totally within your own control, and no one else's. If you're looking for someone else to keep you out of trouble, then trouble is what you're going to find.

I Blew It

I messed up a lot of things in my life. That's why I'm in this program. I'm from Hayward. I did some messed up things in Hayward. But Walden House really opened up my eyes. On January 9th 2007 I would be in this program for a year.

I used to grind, rob, fight — all of the above. This my first time being in a placement or away from home except for the hall. It's bad. The hall felt like a home away from home, ya dig.

I rap and dance. Yeah, I could spit, and yeah, ya girl go gigs. I'm 'bout to be back home in like two months. I'm 'bout to keep rapping wit' Cache Pblow Records. Remember yung Jazz'Ah Belle, but I'm gon always remember where I come from.

-Yung Jazz'Ah Belle

From The Beat: We noticed that you wrote "thizz" for this, so we want to point out something we just read about ecstasy, and that is that it causes the heart valves to enlarge, creating leaks inside the heart! It requires surgery to repair, or it can lead to death. Just one more thing to consider if ecstasy was your drug of choice...

Taking Things For Granted

There are many things in life I've taken for granted. Some of them are my freedom, my friends/family, my home (e.g. shower, bed, food...), where I'm from, clean clothes, and so much more. Taking advantage of things in life taught me how I shouldn't take things for granted.

I am so glad I have been through the things I did because it made me who I am today. I am much more grateful for what I get today. Because I took many thing for granted and then got them taken away, I realized how important they really are.

-Sara

From The Beat: Is this the first time you've been taken from your family? If it isn't, then why didn't the last experience make you want to change? What are the things you plan to change in order to hold on to those things you cherish?

You Blew It

Hella people did blow it up for me...
Man, my pops let me down...
He left and ain't neva came back...
He my most worst disappointment...
If I ever see him, I'ma try to hurt him

-Crack Head

From The Beat: Okay, so your dad was never a day to you. That's tragic, especially considering how your life might have gone if he'd been around. But just like you want people to understand how you got where you are, it would be interesting to know how your father got to where he was or is. Did his childhood play a role in the later failures in his life? How would hurting him (we changed your actual ending) help you?

Story From A Broken Soul

Life is like suicide
Every day dealing with pride
Hate comes to me in strides
Struggling every day to live my life
When will the madness end
Will it end up with me in the pen?
God, where is the heart You said you would lend?
Please take my soul to condemn!
Every day is a struggle! Fresh out of jail!
Pretty soon I will be waiting for bail.
I sat for days in a one-bed cell
Life is a struggle so don't take it for granted.
A story from a broken soul.

-Speedy

From The Beat: We don't understand how life is like suicide. A struggle? Yes. But every minute of that struggle is an effort in the opposite direction from suicide. If you end up in the pen, it will be because of choices you make after leaving here. Why would you make such choices? Why do you think your soul needs to be condemned? Rather than condemning it, we wish you would think clearly about why you even have a soul, and what you owe yourself...

Struggles In A Teen's Life

I used to do really good I school,
My behavior was top notch
I started getting into fight's because I didn't think twice
I got suspended, started giving up and became so ungrateful
It became really hard
I felt like giving up, like I was a failure
There was so much drama... too much that I could even remember
When I turned a teen, I smoked my first blunt
At the time I thought it was so good
I felt so relaxed, I was so cool
I started smoking every day
You could barely catch me sober
My habit got so bad, I stopped going to school
I had to stay getting money to do what I thought was cool
I also started robbing people to get what I want, what I thought I needed
I started getting real violent and more into crimes
I couldn't help myself, it felt so right
Then one day I got caught up in a violent crime
I got locked up
It was so hard to do the time
I got out and was on probation
I didn't want to change, I liked my old ways
I just had to learn the hard way
I just had to be bad
Guess what
Now I'm back in a cell
I thought I was going back home
The system ain't no joke
Now I'm in a group home
But really even worse
It's a rehab
Walden House
I'm being judged as a statistic
I feel real hurt and upset, but now I know I can't risk it
And be slippin'
So I'ma do what I gotta do and see this program through

-No Name

From The Beat: The only "false" note in this autobiographical piece is the line: "I couldn't help myself..." That's nothing more than a cop out. And we don't think you're being "judged as a statistic." Instead, you're being given a rare chance to deal with a habit that can only bring you down. We hope, as you gain experience here, you'll see that this is an opportunity you should be grateful for.

From YGC To PSK

It's me, LaRonda, in Walden House PSK. I'm doin' good. It's coo' here at PSK. They treat you like fam'. It ain't no lock down. You're half free.

You have to listen to them to move up in the program and go home. I miss my family and I'll be home with them soon if I do my program and stop focusing on shhh that ain't gone help me.

-LaRonda

From The Beat: We don't know what "shhh" you're focusing on, but your focus should be what you need to do when you get home to avoid being taken away again. We know you know everything you have to do, and everything you have to stop doing. But only you know if you will follow through on what you know.

Missin' You

(This is just to people I miss)
I miss my blood brothers and stepbrothers, Jaquan, Wendell, Wendol, and Karl. I miss my kids, Leon and Ardana. I miss all my friends and family.

-LaRonda

From The Beat: Sorry about taking out that long list of names at the end, LaRonda, but The Beat has a policy of only letting people name those they are writing about if they tell us something about them. Maybe you could take one of those people you named and write a piece about why he or she is so special.

Nerve

Y'all got y'all nerve tryin' to play me up out here.
I can write any recipe I want.
I bet you mama can't even cook like dat
You wish you could taste ma seafood

-Lil' Kk

From The Beat: How about taking The Beat as seriously as we take you... This piece is really a nothing piece. It teaches nothing and says not much more. We're looking for something meaningful and real. Can you deliver (and we're not talking "seafood")?

Da Beat

I have always wanted to learn about defense attorneys. Since I was in middle school, this topic has always been an interest. Also, I have been told by many different people I can hold a good argument. But for me, what is the point when you can take off on them? That's the old me though. I'm trying to keep positive, especially in this program.

-Kirstin

From The Beat: If "the old" you saw no point in talking out disagreements because you could always go off on the person, then we're very glad that's the OLD you. Going off on someone you don't agree with is the act of a child. You are not a child. Develop your argumentative skills, finish school, go to law school, and then the world is yours!

Had It All, Lost It All

Growing up I had it made. You name it, I had it. I slowly started takin' little things for granted. I eventually got out of control and lost everything I had. I'm now sitting in rehab fighting to get the little dignity I had back.

-Bam Bam

From The Beat: Being in rehab is not a reason to think you have little dignity. In fact, it took dignity to enter the program and to be honest about how you got here. You might have to earn some trust back (and we trust that you can and will), but dignity is something you will always carry with you. Now it's up to you to live it.

Taking My Life For Granted

What I took for granted is my life because of what I did. Somebody always tryin' to fight me or shoot me, and I ain't tryin' to be in that place no more. That is how I blew it.

-Peaches and Cream

From The Beat: How did you get in "that place?" Can you retrace the steps of your life that led there... and then work backwards to reclaim what you've lost?

Is Santa Fiction Or Nonfiction

I think Santa is fiction because when I was younger I knew my mom was Santa because she would go out and buy things that I needed. I think that for most younger children it's easy to tell them Santa is real but at the same time if you keep telling them they would think about it and figure out it's a "hoax."

But when they get older they'll find out that Santa is a person made up for them to be happy and good so they can get stuff. When children become teens they realize that Santa was their best friend and he's gone. To me "Santa is whoever you want or not want it to be."

-Dominic

From The Beat: You always finish your pieces with an incredible line. 'Santa is whoever you want or not want it to be' doesn't rings just as true now as it did then. Do you have any younger siblings that still believe in Santa? Isn't it heart warming to see the smiles on their faces when they open a present from Santa, whether he's real or not?

The Night Before Christmas

I'd would like to take you back to a Christmas for me.
It was a night like any other you see.
I was just a child I think I was just about thirteen.
It was a night like any other Christmas night.
I've been good all year
And I thought I was going to get the best presents that night.
I looked at my mom. She looked a little sad
But I thought it was because of my dad
And so I kissed her and went to bed.
When I woke up that midnight I was filled delight
And so I ran as fast as I could with all my might.
And I got downstairs just to see no gifts
Not a present anywhere to be found.
My mom was still a sleep and I wonder how.
Then my mom came and just gave me a hug.
And said it's not you we just don't have enough.
So right at that point I know Santa wasn't real
But I know that my mom was and that's all I needed to feel.
(My final thought) when your coming of age
And you find out that Santa isn't real don't get mad
Now you know the real Santa so thank your mom or your dad.

-Emmanuel

From The Beat: That's a well-written Christmas story poem. We do need to appreciate our parents when we find out they've been playing Santa all along. It's a shame 'Santa' didn't have enough for you that year even though you were good. How did that experience shape the way you look at Christmas now? Do you feel like you want to give your kids whatever they want for Christmas when you have them?

Loneliness

What is loneliness? Is it an emotion that stands out when you are alone? Is it a feeling that comes around when you miss someone who should have been there with you to the very end? No loneliness is something much more. Loneliness. Loneliness, what are the factors being by yourself, being at a point where you feel like there is no answer.

Do you drink, smoke, play games and/or take walks? Do you appreciate what you have before it's gone? Is that you or I get lonely, or experience loneliness? No, I don't think so. I think loneliness is a figment of our imagination.

Do you think loneliness is all bad? Do you think loneliness is all good? It depends on what you see as loneliness. Can you think of loneliness as a word that you use when you are overwhelmed by sorrow?

Loneliness can be described in two ways. Either lonely as in by yourself. Or lonely as in wit' someone else. What do you feel as loneliness overcomes all your feelings? What do you see as loneliness? I see it in dark, as a lil' girl tryna find her mom. I see it as someone who feels like they will never find the one for them.

-Angel

From The Beat: It seems like you've thought of loneliness before in your life. Would you consider yourself lonely at times? When are you the most lonely? And how do you overcome feelings of loneliness? Maybe you can shed some light on some of our other readers who probably experience loneliness more often than you think.

What Role Does Santa Play In My Life

My dad plays Santa. I remember why I don't believe in Santa because I don't believe in Santa because one Christmas Eve when I woke up at 12:00 midnight and went to bake cookies and pour milk.

When I was finished, I went upstairs then I saw my dad go downstairs with a big bag so I followed him and I saw him putting presents under the tree. My dad kept the presents in his closet under all the clothes. (Yes, I snoop)

-Tiana

From The Beat: Do you wish you could've kept the belief Santa was real for a little longer? When we find out Santa isn't real, it sort of takes the pizzazz out of Christmas. So how do you keep the excitement now that you know your dad plays Santa?

From The Beat: It's been our utmost pleasure working with the young, intellectual, and powerful young people over at Canon Barcus. They made our Wednesdays a little easier to cope with as they always sparked great conversations and even greater writing. Unfortunately this will be our last installment from them because our funding has run out over there. We wish we had both the time and money to do workshops with them for free because we really enjoy them, but because we live in a capitalistic society, we must give to receive in order to survive. We can't stress how wonderful the young people are over there and want to give a special shout out to Mari and James for making all of this possible. You two are really dedicated and its not often we get people who are so passionate about this work they'd even pull our coat tails when we didn't show consistency like we should have. You two are soldiers we need in our community and we hope the young people appreciate you as much as we have. Be good to James and Mari because we know they have your best interest at heart. Thanks and hopefully we can make this happen again soon

One Thing People Don't Know About Me

One thing people don't about me is that I'm shy when I'm around someone I like or don't know. Another thing is that I will go off on somebody in a minute if they pick on me and also that if you're being hella messy around me and can't get your story straight I'll tell you that you're messy! That's what people don't know about me!

-Andria

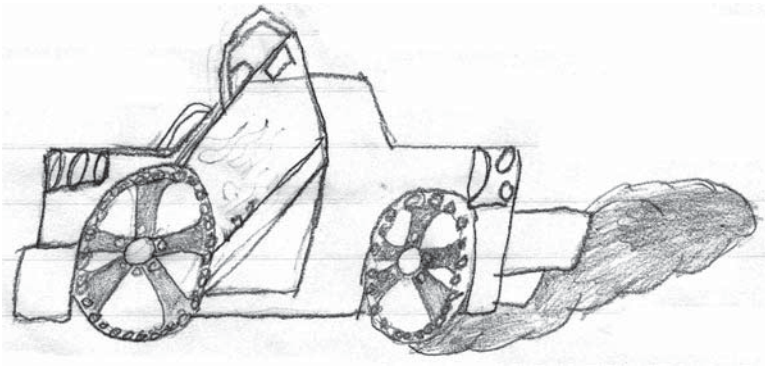
From The Beat: Well, we're glad we know that about you now. We wouldn't want to be somebody you 'go off' on. Do you know anyone that's too messy for you to be around? How is that person messy?

Favorite Thing To Eat

My favorite things to eat are cookies.
I love my grandmother's memories.
I love the way she would laugh with me.
I love things and how they used to be.
We would make these cookies all day.
I cried the day she went away.
The cookies like puffy clouds.
You can still hear the screams and shouts.
She hasn't left.
Now what we can do the best is eat cookies and let her rest.

-L.B

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your grandmother, she sounds like an excellent woman. The way you talk about her cookies makes us hungry and it's almost lunch time. What is your favorite kind of cookie? Have you ever tasted a better cookie than the one you ate with your grandma?



Looking Back At Past Experiences

Now, I go to Lowell High School and I hate going there. I have to wake up at 6:00 am and get ready to go to school. The teachers give a lot of homework and tests. Many times I wish I didn't go there and instead to a school where my friends were.

Even though I'm grateful I got into such a good school, I regret it sometimes. There are many people in the hallways and even in the rooms. Everything there is so hard and also there are tests everyday. I have to study almost everyday and would have multiple tests almost everyday. I get lonely sometimes because I feel like a stranger and most of my friends have different periods.

Even though I'm suffering now, when I go to college it'll be easy. That's what the people say. There are so many advantages and disadvantages in going to a good school. My friends who go to other schools brag to me about their grades. And I feel dumb because the grades they have now, I got before.

Going to Lowell makes me feel stupid because the teachers have such a high expectation. But when I pass high school I'll never then regret it.

-Cindy

From The Beat: Yeah, there are two sides to every coin. But one thing's for sure, if you plan on going to college, Lowell is probably one of the best public high schools in the city to prepare you. Do you know what you want to major in when you go to college? Are you being responsible and doing your homework now so that it'll be that much easier for you in college? Well, we know you can pull through, so keep your head up...

A Piece Of My Heart

When you lose something is not as harsh as when you lose someone. When I lost my dad I didn't know very much I was only 5, then someone special came into my life, a father, a friend, a buddy, 6 years with a person makes you get very attached to that person and when that person walks out of your life it can really cause damage to your heart.

If I was to lose that person I've met my heart would lose a piece I would feel like I lost something that I could never replace... a father, my dad may be a step dad but he's my real dad to me because someone whose special is someone who is there for you in good times and bad.

-Nelly

From The Beat: You have a great point... Forget losing something, it's way worse losing someone you love. Fortunately you had a man willing to be a good step-dad because a lot of times people that lose their parents don't find anyone else that could fit that role. Does your step-father know how much you appreciate him?

Fake People

Roses are red.
Violets are blue and people judge me.
Because I say the truth.
People judge and are afraid to say.
People talk about people.
But can't say it in their face.
Some are fake and afraid to say the truth.
Because what comes around goes around
And you know that too.

-Nelly

From The Beat: Short poem that speaks volumes and you are so right. People talk about other people when they're dissatisfied with their own life. Do you care about what people have to say about you? Well, judging from this poem, you are very intelligent and there's no limit to the things you could do.

That Person

The one person I find hardest to please in my family is my sister April. The reason that is, is because we are completely different, she is into music and dance and I'm into wrestling and baseball. Plus she always gets into trouble with school and at home, she always hangs out with the girls that are up to no good and she gets into trouble by them.

My mom always tells her to stop but sometimes she doesn't listen. Every time someone ask me are we brother and sister I say "no" because we act in different ways. Sometimes she gets in trouble with kids at the house and they be trying to beat her up. "I personally hope they do one day and teach her a lesson." This may sound evil but "When that day comes I going to be happier then the day I got my first pay check."

-Dominic

From The Beat: It sounds like you're really fed up with your sister's behavior. Have you expressed this to her? Sometimes the ones in our family we don't like the most, end up being the closest to us later on in life. Do you think this will ever be true of you and your sister? Why or why not?

Who Are You?

Does anyone know who he or she is? Well myself I have a simple concept of who I am. But my question is can we show people who they are. The answer is no it must be unlocked. And once you find it you must share it. So you can help other people find there's.

We all have great power locked inside of us. But do you have the will power to look for it or even find it? Well, to some I am the equivalent of another loud pissed off Black man waiting for the revolution to a cure but it already has through me. So now I stand here and I know whom I am. Who are you!

-Emmanuel

From The Beat: You are a very deep writer and a powerhouse in our workshops. We really appreciate all your insight and couldn't imagine a workshop without you. Knowing who you are is a big step because not many people can honestly explain who they are. What are you going to become?

Hasn't Really Played A Role

Santa hasn't really played a role in my life 'cause I didn't believe in him. The reason is me and my brother we always stay up to play video games and we heard something downstairs it was my auntie putting presents under the tree and signing them from Santa.

-Ronnie

From The Beat: It's a shame that we find out about Santa so young nowadays because it's nice knowing we're getting rewarded for being good. The older we get the more that stops, so please enjoy it while you can.

One Thing About Me That They Don't Know

The one thing about me that they don't know is
When you look at me I have a traffic flow of emotions
Going up and down like a highway.
That I am a stronger then I look
That people misjudge me because of how I act, think, talk, behave, spell, eat, sleep, and maybe even walk.
One thing about me that they don't know is behind all the words I speak comes truth power.
That on the words of hatred I spit venom on the ones
That do wrong to my people.
My people that's right I said my, my people.
Don't put us in a category.
One thing about me that they don't know is
When they see a young experienced black woman.
But what I see is a person who is a powerful figure in front of you. Don't judge me by the one thing you think you know about me.
But judge me by the one thing you don't know.
Let me ask you this: when you say, "I know one thing about you"
What are you implying?
Are you saying that you know me.
'Cause if you say you know me
Are you saying that you know everything about me.
Or are you just assuming you know everything.
One thing about me that they don't know is that when I stand tall
I stand so the wind can't break me down.
So that my branches won't break.
That when I run I run like I ain't nothing holding me back
Like I am an escaped Negro.
One thing that they will never know about me
Is that not only am I a strong young black woman.
A young black woman who knows what one wants in life.
So don't presume to tell me that you know me because you don't.
And that's one thing you don't know about me.

-Angel

From The Beat: You have a great talent... You're a very amazing poet and we hope that even after The Beat is long gone from your life you'll continue to express yourself using this art form because you're so good at it. You have that 'slam poet' aura about you. And we appreciate you standing up to read after our workshops because we know that takes a very courageous person. What can we do to help you along your poetic journey?

I Felt Wanted

The last time I felt wanted was when the team group wanted me, another time I was wanted was at school to meet a visitor at my school and talk to them about my school.

-Trayvon

From The Beat: Do you like feeling wanted? Or would you rather be left alone? We understand either way, but we just know it's nice to feel wanted.

What's Cold

What is cold to me is getting shot at or getting jumped for nothing or getting talked about by your friend.

-Trayvon

From The Beat: Those things are cold... We think you have much more to say than what's written. It's a shame this is all you could come up with.

What Was My Way Out?

My way out is to go to school and go to college and get my diploma. And not drop out of high school.

-Trayvon

From The Beat: That's a good way out... Can you elaborate on what you're doing now to make sure that happens?

When you lose something is not as harsh as when you lose someone.

Fascism Been Here Strong And Only Getting Stronger And More Efficient

JAMES CRAWFORD ***Our political prisoner is back on the scene with a bang... This week he speaks more in depth about fascism and we can't help but pay attention. We think the law passed in Fresno, CA about holding parents accountable for their kids actions sparked his latest fury towards the government. He knows that in some neighborhoods it's way harder to survive than in other neighborhoods, so he's displeased at the latest news information. He already believes that people working for low wages are usually the last people that should be getting low wages. They're usually the single parents of our society, trying to earn ends meat for their little one. Our country, land of the free, makes it so hard to be free. They're constantly locking us up in minimum wage jobs, low funded schools with no materials, and most obviously in jails. Well, people like James are tired of it and want a change. But how do we go about doing it? That's the million dollar question: how do we break the cycle of committing crimes to survive and triumph over the beast that's been holding us down for the longest — our very own government... For the people, by the people should be changed for a small margin of the people by a small margin of the people. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, and we love hearing from him because he keeps us informed... Thanks James...***

I recently shared some valuable insight in regards to fascism and I gave a specific meaning to what fascism mean so that our people, old and young, Black, Brown, White, or Asian will know that fascism is a threat to every living soul under the sun. I'll leave you all again with that meaning after the brief run down of the fascist recent moves as it applies to tightening the chains around the people in hopes to control every aspect of their very lives.

Here in Corcoran, Ca. the local news tend to focus on Fresno county and like all impoverished communities there is poor conditions that manifest behaviors that is disruptive throughout that community Many of these families don't make no more then 8,000 to 10,000 a year which is way below the poverty line, yet many of the adults in these families are single parents barely able to feed their children. The labor they put in for these low wages is ridiculous many work 50 to 60 hour weeks so it should be appalling to every working class people especially the underclass workers (Proletarian) to hear these Capitalist/Fascist proposed a law in Fresno to fine parents two thousand dollars and a year in county jail for the "Truancy" of their children. This is just one of many of the most heinous laws that these fascists has imposed on the poor communities in Amerikkka, on one hand this very capitalist, corporative, government has failed to invest in these communities. Instead they economically deprive these very communities forcing the people to result to desperate measures to survive.

This is the motivating force for criminal activity. The very foundation upon which economical relationships and interactions is based in a capitalist society insures there will always be a broad cross section of the population force out of the viable wage market and into survival tactics such as crime. This is why they (U.S Gov.) created the highly developed prison industrial complex, (i.e. juvenile hall, CYA, county jails and state and federal prisons.) in order to profit from the suffering of your own community and family, and to dispose of this surplus population. Meaning that the surplus population is the proletarian and Lumpen Proletarian. When I say proletarian, I'm talking about the underclass workers. When I say Lumpen Proletarian, I'm talking about the non-workers who are selling dope, pimping, prostitution, panhandling, robbing, gang-banging doing whatever it takes to survive or to make a profit.

So for the system to put single parent against child is reminiscing to the old slave master practice ran by Willie Lynch further dividing the youth from the adults. When this happens it allows the racists/fascists government officials to bring forth fascist policies to incarcerate not only the parent but the children as well. This is nothing more an attack on the poor communities by racists, fascist, capitalists to continue their agenda of demoralization and passive acceptance of absolute domination by the state and more importantly the ruling class which the state serve. So you (youngsters) better wake up because this is not no game. They are serious about exterminating you as well as your parents and family.

Why would they introduce a policy that go after your parents and family? Why would they introduce a policy that goes after your parents? When it's obvious they struggle daily to make ends meet. Many who are of color as we can see from these incarcerated... Crime is only a justification to treat poor people like slaves/animals. Empower yourself with knowledge — to hell with being a criminal — challenge the power that has oppressed your people for generations. One love, one struggle.

Fascism's in depth meaning, is the unholy union of corporate interest and the state political infrastructure and their wills being enforced by the military industrial complex all guided by the capitalist elite (ruling class). It must be understood that for this union to be functional they must possess absolute control over the thought, action, speech technique, behavior and institutionalized belief of the population that there are dominating domestic surveillance of phone calls, tracking of credit card activities, close circuit camera surveillance of the public by law enforcement nation wide, making it mandatory for libraries to disclose what books or websites you check out to the federal government. Gang injunction, the creation of "free speech zone" forcing political protestors into closed areas where their voice will not be heard.

What you must understand that when you are told that a specific style of dress "baggy clothing" is indicative of gang affiliation, depriving you of your freedom of expression, this is fascism. When you are forced by teachers that you must study particular curriculums such as "intelligent design" and told that you cannot study others "such as socialist economic theory," this is fascism. When you are told that because you are a teenager and the youth in the eyes of law enforcement are inherently criminal, are subjected to city mandated curfews and regional in junctions "such as no teens in the mall between 3pm/5pm," this is fascism. When you can't leave your community for fear of police harassment because you're a non-white male "walking while black or brown," this is fascism. Fascism pervades your life every waking moment of everyday and sometimes even invades your sleep mocking you from your nightmares. (Educate yourself now)

ANTHONY ROMPREY ***Some experiences we go through that make us change might not do the same for someone else, so all we can do in those situations is remain a pinnacle of support for those feelings, so when they do finally decide to change they can witness how far along they came. This next writer who was once a writer in SF/YGC and is now locked up in San Bruno (the new San Francisco County Jail) in San Bruno, CA, fighting to stay out of the CDC. Well, this is his testament of people trying to tell him to stop. He goes about it in a way that's respectful, so we have to give him credit for that. Hopefully he'll realize that the people trying to tell him to stop are the ones who have his best interests at heart.***

Time To Stop

They say stop doing it, it only leads to trouble
But I'm a hard head, raised up from the soil.
Real experiences, holding me down,
Kind of hard to smile, might be prison bound.
It ain't never been no coward in me,
Just miss my Chinita and my family.
There ain't no stopping, in this life I lead,
Slow down just a notch baby, drinkin' them high speeds.
Standin' on the block, thinkin' I'm not being watched,
Little do I know, the police on the rooftop.
Got binoculars, radios, and high tech devices,
Narcs hit the block, twenty dollars is there prices.
It's time to stop champ, that's what they keep telling me,
But little do they know evil lurks around the corner,
Not knowing I'ma 'bout to catch a felony
Damn they got me, going straight to the Mission Station,
All felonies, no misdemeanors, is what they tell me I'm facin'.
Slow the machine down is what I was thinking 'bout doin,
Should of listened to my conscious,
'Cause now the next couple of months is ruined.
Stand tall and proud and don't let the next man see me sweat,
'Cause I'm a warrior, that'll stand up for my circle,
Challenge the courts, you bet.
So do I think it's time to stop this life I'm livin',
Only if I'm promised ever lasting life and a couple of millions!
Real shhh, stop, there is no stopping cause honestly it's easy to stop, But it's hard to change my life.

THE BEAT WITHOUT

DAVE KODET *Well, we're starting to run our contest submissions for the 16th editorial note writing contest where we asked people to write a letter to the president. We didn't get that many submissions for this topic, so the competition isn't as fierce as we would like it to be, so over the next few weeks we will incorporate the pieces along with the rest of the BWO. This next writer sounds like he's been thinking about this for some time now, or at least thinking about politics and now can vent his beliefs onto the president. And it's probably likely that the president won't read this, but maybe that's the biggest problem with our country. We're always in everyone else's business and not worrying about our own. There are very intelligent people locked up, we sweep them under the rug and don't worry about them until they get back out. But maybe society's 'outcasts' have some answers and furthermore need to be heard. He's writing from the Wisconsin Resource Center in Winnebago, Wisconsin.*

A nation that is capable of reaching the planets can tend to its own land. A people who have taken so much from the earth can render just a portion back into it...

Mr. President

"Beware the leader who bangs the drums of war in order to whip the citizenry into a patriotic fevor, for patriotism is indeed a double edged sword. It both emboldens the blood, just as it narrows the mind. And when the drums of war reach a fever pitch and the blood boils with hate and the mind has closed, the leader will have no need in seizing the rights of the citizenry, rather the citizenry, infused with jean and blinded by patriotism will offer up all their rights unto the leader and gladly so. How do I know? For this is what I've done and I am Caesar!" — Julius Caesar.

I am a U-S citizen who attempts to dissect the ridiculous double talk and contradictory statements you make via your speeches, press releases and weekly addresses, I lost my sight, to vote on my own accord, that doesn't mean my voice shouldn't be heard, even though I'm sure this letter will never make it to your desk, I know it will be read by someone and that's all that matters to me.

There are so many questions I wish you would answer but I know that won't happen. The 1st is, "why did we immediately respond and send billons of dollars to India after the tsunami, but delayed after a category 2 hurricane hit the U-S?" (which I may add still looks as if hit just yesterday) 2nd, " how is it possible to blow a multi-billion dollar surplus left by the Clinton administration and put us 2.2 trillion dollars in debt in the just four years of your term? 3rd "why do you feel it is essential that we send all of our jobs over to China, Indonesia, Taiwan, etc...?" (all that does is line the pockets of your top 1% buddies huh?) 4th "I can agree and justify Afghanistan myself but can you do that with Iraq?" No one has been able to show legitimate reason to go to war, furthermore why not release the actual number of soldiers wounded totaled with those killed?

Earlier I mentioned our top 1%, here I must revisit that further. There are formidable pressures on people in this world. The results often lead to ostracism, which can be as important as security to all but the strongest. Scores of departments of government both federal and state conglomerate corporations, demand commitment in the name of national interest; manufacturers demand the contracts and send highly paid lobbyists to get them; Organized labor plays them all off against each other and threatens with strikes and votes. Finally, the senators and congressmen — their districts cry out for economic benefits derived from the whole bundle. Where do you find the independent on incorruptible man within such a system? The answer to that, lies somewhere between our being a nation of laws, and the checks and balances of a relatively free society. Which can be reduced to the human condition of wanting more, to somebody else's less, and the pot goes to the man who has raised the biggest bet on bank. That's what the Soviet Union found out; why the primary theories of Marx and Engles didn't wash. One can't change the human condition.

People have often told me "stop it... You'll do extraordinary damage." That I have no idea how dangerous my speaking could be for this world. Sorry it's not in me to quit. I've spent many of my young years watching greedy men drive themselves to unendurable lengths trying to wrench vital decisions from the courts and other levels of bureaucracy. I've seen executives in agencies throughout the government itself openly weep, deny, scream at their subordinates, even take their life... because they were caught in the political labyrinth, their ability to act numbered by the counterthrusts of indecision, most tragic, I've stood helplessly by while this very nation has nearly plunged into catastrophe because men and women were too frightened to take position, too concerned with their constituencies to accept the mantles of responsibility. Our government has reached the point of unmanageability and it's across the board; it's not restricted to any one area, we've become a grotesque, awkward, jumbling giant. Instant communications have the decision-making process put into the living rooms of hundreds of millions of uninformed households (which I think is a good thing).

If you say I'm being bleak then you forgot about or lost your powers of observation. Take the past few decades, forgetting for a minute the extraterritorial problems such as South East Asia, Korea, the Middle East, Bay Of The Pigs, the Berlin wall and Nato, all of which could have been handled with infinitely greater wisdom by unencumbered leaders. Let's look at the country itself. An insecuritable, totally unreliable economy; terrible recessions, inflation mass unemployment. The urban crisis which threatens revolution and I mean armed revolution; uncontrolled strikes, utility services lost for weeks; a dissolute military, life with incompetency and inadequate command. Can anyone really say these are products of an orderly society?

Truly outspoken men are more dangerous in death and forced retirement then they are in active life. Because they leave legacies, they become rallying points for crusades, they are the martyrs, the symbols. They cause the breeding of discontented rats that multiply and nibble away at our foundations? We have no time to spend stamping out their nests.

The men/women behind big business. The top 1% if you will, want to run the country because they're convinced they know better than the voters on the streets and they have the power sadly to convey their ideas into the system. And just think there are hundreds of them in corporate board rooms everywhere. It scares me to think that sooner or later they'll get together, instead of being a legitimate part of the system, they'll be the system. This is something I don't agree with. I'm not sure what I agree with yet, but I don't agree with that. We're 10 steps away from our own particular police state, I want people to know it.

A nation that is capable of reaching the planets can tend to its own land. A people who have taken so much from the earth can render just a portion back into it... a citizenry that has supported fairly and unfairly the expenditures of millions beyond its borders, can certainly build within

Respectfully,

Answer This!

Why did Rosie open her mouth about Trump cause he was once bankrupt? Answer this!
Answer this! Why is our troops still in Iraq if Bush already got his oil?
Answer this! Why did they put a hold on all executions after they murdered Big Tookie?
Why it couldn't be before?
Answer this! Why my girl leave me before I was notified I was going to state prison?
Answer this! Why does my family treat me like a red-headed step child cause I'm locked away?
Answer this! Why they trippin' off Kramer cause the n-word slip? Platinum rappers use that word. However, no one ever trips. Check this. I was once told what's in the dark shall come to light. It's nice to know Kramer's true feelings, but he's dead wrong.
Answer this! Why am I labeled a criminal and this is my first time in prison?
Answer this! Why haven't nobody noticed Beyonce is cross-eyed, but yet she is one of the most beautiful girls in the world?
Answer this! Why did Martin Luther King Jr. die? Why are people in New Orleans still hungry and without housing?
Answer this! Why in prison on Christmas they give you a half piece of fake ham and half piece of mystery meat? Real talk!
Answer this! Is it still a man's world even though my boy James Brown died?
Answer this! Why is the world still filled with hate when people speak about love so much?
Answer this! Why because I'm in prison I get treated un-human like?
Answer this! Why does everything have to be about money? Answer that!
This piece is dedicated to my boy The Realest. Without his sincere input this piece would not be. Beat, watch out for him!

Nobody (But God) Cares!

Nobody seems to care about me, but the Lord does. Said He'll always be there for me. So I hold my head up to the sky and praise Him high till the day I die. They say don't ask why cause His ways are not our ways, His understanding is not our understanding. Real talk y'all. I'll just keep praying to the Lord and praising Him hard with my hands up to the heavens as His plans for my life unfold as I walk and come boldly to the throne of grace.

No matter how hard the devil pushes and shoves, I gotta walk in love, even when it seems nobody cares about me. I know it's a lie cause God has got my back and that's a fact. Some things just seem so whack, like people talking smack, saying I'm no good cause I'm from the hood, greatly misunderstood but they need to see I'm a new creature in Christ Jesus (Yashua). Old things are past away, behold all things are to become new. So I'ma let God do what He do in me 'cause it's a good thang rolling with Him, no more looking over my shoulder and caring about getting older.

Nobody seems to care but God, so I'll keep striving daily in this wicked world I'm forced to live in, surrounded with sin. It's no problem cause I got to win with the Lord on my side. All friends, family, have forsaken me but God has got my back and has been there for me since day one. According to the gospel this battle has already been won when Jesus stomped on the devil and rose again on the third day. So now everything else I can do through Christ Jesus who strengthens me as well and will supply all my need according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.

Nobody seems to care but God does, so I'm get this "s" off my chest cause I ain't Superman. However, I'll let the whole world know I've been saved although I ain't Super Dave. God just paved a straight road for me by Him allowing His Son to die on the cross for me. I know all ain't lost and the cost for my sins been paid, higher than I could ever pay. Nobody seems to care but God does, so devil get out my hair and to all my saved ones, I'll see you on the other side. Peace y'all. One love and keep looking up cause there is something better here and there!

NASIR DAVIS ***Usually when we're asking questions, 'why' is a good one to start with. This next writer, who we're sure most of you have heard from, closes with a poem that asks those brilliant questions many of us don't have the answers to. But he starts off with a letter to The Beat describing his last encounter with the parole boards. He obviously didn't get paroled, but they came at him so foul it sparked a fire in him to keep the faith, dust himself off and keep pushing through the journey of incarceration, which has been the frustration for a lot of us for a very long time. The process of determining whether someone is fit to re-enter society by looking at their criminal file and sitting down with them for about fifteen minutes to talk just doesn't seem right. But what do we know, right? Maybe The Beat should conduct parole hearings... Anyhow, he's writing from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA, and we're sorry to hear about your latest experience with the board... We're keeping the faith with you and we know next time will be better... Could it get any worse?***

Dear Beat Within Family

Hey, greetings in a real way! It's yo' boy Nasir (Paul) Davis. I've been missing in action for a minute. However, I ain't forgot about y'all. I just got out the hole after 2-1/2 months on false charges of battery on an inmate. I say false charges because it was simply a fight. Well, truly a misunderstanding with Satan trying to prevail against God's soldier. However in the end even though it seems like I lost, I truly won because there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Now last I wrote to The Beat Within I was waiting to go to my third parole hearing. Well, on November 29, 2006 I went to my third parole hearing from Ad-Seg (hole), shackled like an animal, all because I tried to help someone out. Well to keep it clean with you all, I kinda felt I was going in there with the deck stacked against me for more than one reason, plus I was currently in the hole for the so-called abovementioned offense, so they was frowning on me for real. No matter what I was saying or what achievements I was showing them, it truly didn't matter because all they could see was my past and anything anyone else had to say negative against me. Plus I had a real serious dump truck public pretender (name taken out for retaliatory reasons). Yeah I'm calling out names because he need to be put out there. He tried to get mad because I let it be known he was dumping me, but I did go through with the hearing because God showed me I'll be leaving prison soon no matter what man says, because if God is for me who can be against me?

The parole commissioners honestly talked bad to me and did everything to provoke me in the worst way, but I didn't bite. The only thing they did to me was give me fuel to keep on pushing for the Lord and become successful in life, regardless of what they said or believe about me. I know I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. See when people in life tell me I can't do something I just push that much harder and prove them wrong cause no matter how far I may fall short, I just get back up again and keep going till I make it. So why they making fun of me and kicking me while I'm down, I'm lacing my big black boots and 'bout to stomp on all the naysayers in a real way and this is how I get at 'em!

You see when they think you can't, you most definitely can! When they say you won't, you will, and when they say it's impossible, God is saying all things are possible to him who believes. So as I keep pushing forward and reaching toward the heavens for my dreams and goals, I expect you all to do the same, and I'm speaking to whomever is reading this.

I ain't never been a quitter in life no matter what has been thrown my way and ya' know if someone is messing with me on a cool level, I ain't gonna let them quit either. I have learned through the years, with sweat, blood and tears, sometimes you gotta fake it till ya' make it.

JAY ***This next writer is an inspiration to us all. This week he drops three heavy hitting poems, from the California Department of Corrections, for us and as he does so we see the incredible range he has to both sides of the spectrum. From writing a love poem to someone he met through paper and pen to writing about how he has 'to do what he gotta do,' he let's us know he's very capable of speaking about almost anything. Then he closes with a very compassionate poem to a young girl he read in The Beat. We guess her story effected him to a point where he felt the need to respond. That's the power of the pen, and furthermore, the power of The Beat. We all have hearts and we all need to be heard regardless of what our files say about us.***

You Don't See What I See In You

I met this young beautiful woman, through paper and pen
We been corresponding with each other for almost a year now
I can honestly say she's my true to heart friend
Life has been a lot better knowing she's on my side
This girl is the wind beneath my feet, I feel as if I can fly
Young, pretty, vivacious, with class and a sexy smile
She don't judge me for my actions that got me in prison (thug style)
Only problem I got, she don't seem to understand
She's the definition of what a woman should be
Yet she cheats herself, instead of treats herself
When it comes to friends and a good man
For you guys that wanna know, let me describe her to you
She's beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, how did I do?
I want her to know I value what we got
Our friendship will last forever, like Jada and Tupac
From this day I promise to keep my emotions in check
In her pictures she looks so lovable and huggable I tend to forget
Keep up the good work, you'll be on top of the world soon
I'll forever support you anyway I can, 1 plus 1 equals two
Some may not understand, but I know some do
Baby girl, you don't see, what I see in you!

I Do What I Gotta Do

For the past 15 years struggling, yet still surviving
Mama got murdered in cold blood, but I keeps the hustle alive
From the mean streets to CYA, county jails, now in the pen.
I learned early in the game once mama gone,
So are family and friends
People wanna smile in your face. They some phony mutha's
Steady bumping their gums, knocking the next man's hustle.
Cowards ain't been where I been, or see what I seen.
Yet they got my name in they mouth 24/7,
Like I'm some star in a magazine.
This world's a trip, I hustle and flow, plus keep it true.
Don't hate me cause I'll be free, and still thuggin'.
I do what I gotta do.

Dedicated To Katherine

I read your story; I must admit it hurt my soul
How that boy treated you so rough, you was only thirteen years old
The stuff I done read, made me shed tears of blood
I got a cousin that was your age, she went through similar stuff
It's amazing how us men can treat you women so wrongly
Then we get ourselves locked up, start crying like Keith Sweat
But you're my one and only, baby I'm so lonely
I hope you find the inner strength to push on
Use what that lil' boy done as motivation to roll on
You're God's beautiful creation, you're a young woman (this fact)
White, yellow, purple, green, red, or blue — especially if you're black
Keep your head up baby girl, wit' your eyes on the prize
When you're of age, a good man will make you his wife
Life is not always sweet; it has its ups and downs
You're no longer trapped; you're a free young woman now!

BELLIGERENT DEVIL ***We think this may be a first here at The Beat, so pay close attention. When you're deprived of everything you learn to make the best with what you've got. Your imagination congers up things that you normally wouldn't think of — new ways of dealing with relationships, new ways of passing the time, and even new ways of eating... This week this next writer gives us some recipes out of the 'County Jail Cook Book,' and though we had to take the 'pruno' one out because of obvious reasons, the rest of them may make your days eating commissary food a little brighter. He's writing from a county jail and we hope to hear more from him soon. Right now, we have to go taste what the 'devil's' cooking...***

County Jail Cook Book

(Cadillac Of Coffee)
1 Atomic cinnamon fireball
1 spoon coffee
1/2 Milky Way bar
1 packet hot coco
a third carton of milk
2 packs sugar

(Ghetto Corn Nuts)
1 Bags Peanuts
1 mustard
1 mayonnaise
1 spicy Ramen seasoning
Mix/enjoy

(Fruit Salad)
1 bag county lettuce
1 cup county pineapple
Italian dressing
Good to lose weight instead of soups and sandwiches.

(Single Sweet Sour "Spread")
2 slices lunch meat
1 cup county pineapple
1 package Ramen noodles
Italian dressing
three punch Kool- Aid packs

Start a few hours early. Take an empty bread bag, chop lunch meat into 1/2 inch squares. Add Italian salad dressing. Three Kool Aids and 1/2 cup of water. Add soup spices, Texas Beef is good. So is Cajun Shrimp and Chilli flavors.

To make teriyaki chicken use no Kool Aid, Texas Beef and Chicken
Made noodles once the marinade has sat in a hot pot a few hours
Or with no heat overnight. Make noodles separate, drain plain noodles Top with pre-prepared meat done right should be off the hook.
Note: can make orange chicken with orange Kool Aid any spicy Ramen. Diet-chicken.

(Banana Bread)
Four slices of bread reduced to crumbs or yellow eggs bread
1 to 2 bananas
White county sugar
County jelly
Gram crackers
Peanuts crushed to small chunks
Mix in bag can let sit in hot pot or eat as soon as done.
Can be simply bread and bananas or extra goodies.
Depending on how sweet you want it.

Once A Criminal Always A Criminal

So many people think that once a criminal, always a criminal. Daily struggles to fight all that is wrong and earn respect from others. Everyday of my life is a constant struggle for respect and a never ending fight to keep on track.

I was released from the juvenile system one day after my 19th birthday in the group home I was sent to. I had a lot of good memories in the home, and a lot of things I wish I took chances to learn how to do.

Towards the end of my stay, I went in for knee surgery. I was scared out of my mind. Yet my friends there, kept some hope with me. It was a long painful recovery. However, I have managed to recover from it.

Upon my release, I was supposed to tell my family about who I am, however, that hasn't happened yet. There are assumptions, but the truth will be revealed on July 9th, 2008. Some know, others have assumptions, others are clueless.

When I came back, I fought to make my life better. I stayed out of trouble for a while. From job to job. Fighting a daily struggle to find out who I am, and where I am going. A now retired counselor from Unit Four in Alameda County, pulled some strings and got me into the beverage industry. It was at a time when you needed to know someone to get in.

I worked for Budweiser in Oakland. One day, I happened to be training a new driver on the route, and I was struck by a Frito-Lay delivery truck, as I walked. This was in 2004. I went back to work early. Settled for less. To this day, I have bone fragments in my neck from the accident. Unfortunately, I signed away any future action from it. I am forced to live with the everyday pains in my neck. Out of it, I got the nickname Spuds.

I ended up getting arrested on some new charges before I started at Budweiser, and violated probation. On July 3rd, I ruined my career at Budweiser. I walked off the job after having a nervous breakdown and I moved to Sun Valley, Nevada. I lived with family, and one bad gesture, sent me to jail in Nevada on false charges. All the charges were dropped shortly after, but I had a pending case in California, since I was arrested in Nevada. I could have walked away a winner in my eyes, but fell off the wagon again.

I got this really cool job for Miller in Oakland. I was promoted through the company three times in a year and a half time period. I still had a lot to learn. I violated probation and was sent to jail for two months.

I was under the impression that my job was secure. It wasn't. I lost my job and everything I worked for. I am out of the business until summer 2007. When my driving record clears out.

I have been through so much over the past year. My Great Grandmother who was very close to me passed away. It was extremely hard for me, even when I knew she was dying. She was the only person close to me that has died.

My dad killed himself, and other members of the family died. Not close to me though. It turned out that 2006 was my worst year so far in life. Over the time, my depression took center stage, and suicide looked to be the only out for me. I didn't want to face up to my mistakes. Fortunately for me, I don't have the balls to take that final step. I have pushed the barriers in life so many times.

One memorable moment was when I was driving up I-5. It was windy, pouring blind rain, and I was driving over 100 miles per hour. I just didn't care anymore. There have been a few moments in life where I just decided to give up.

Recently, I took a look at my life and realized I threw away a great paying job, spent money uncontrollably, and had fake friends along the way. Because of the fact I was on drugs from the first group home, I ruined the lives of my two best friends. I wish I had more control not to say their names while on the drugs they gave me. All that was said was false.

To this day, I am unemployed looking for work daily. I think about the friends I lost over time, and the friends I have now. I am looking for my first crush to see how she is doing, Stephanie M. and my second crush Mark K. both from Dublin, CA. Both went to the middle school, but only Mark went to High School with me.

Overtime, I have been faced with challenges. It has always been up to me to make the correct choices, and learn from the mistakes. Only I control my future. There are a lot of things I want to accomplish in my life, that include retiring at the young age of 40. To be able to enjoy life without the daily grind of work.

The main thing, is to keep it legal. I want to advance my poetry, and my writings too. Here is a poem of mine that was written a couple months ago:

Fighting The Voices
A trip down memory lane,
Fighting along the way
Never knowing what to say.
Painful screeches piercing the sky
Telling us not to cry,
I wonder why?
Fearing the loss of control
Shedding downward spirals
Into a darkened Hell.
Stop the voices!
Stop, I can't take it anymore!
I can't fight them!
The world is growing so dark.
Noah made an ark.
Crossing the world in the dark,
The world is like fake bark.
Tears start flowing into streams of pain
and agony.
I fight the voices of reasoning,
I fight the voices of hatred.
An endless fight of time and pressures
Pour into the souls of millions fighting for life.
Death knocks at the door
Whisking you away into an eternal darkness.
Absolution tearing up the mind
Body and Soul!
A fight gone south,
Battling with what is wanted,
Yet may never have.
A peace inside the mind
Crumbling around into pieces of molten fire
Burning at our souls of hate.
Why won't the voices stop?
The gun tipped against my head.
Pulling the trigger back to end the suffering,
To silence the voices.
Pulling the trigger back
To make it right.
Day turned into night.
It Fires, the voices stopped.
The Voices Stopped!

At the time I wrote this, my mind was heading into a dark place. I look back on this poem and understand where I was in that place in time, and acknowledge the struggles I have had to make my life right again.

I understand the fight of life. Through the times when death is all that is left. The end effects on those around you take center stage. My life has not been the greatest. However, I am out to prove to myself first, then others that I can out live my dad's suicide, other deaths, and a legal history.

This is my life. I attribute my current position of the right choices to my friend Karl A. He has been in similar positions as I have, and has been a constant backdrop to my issues, and the right choices I should take.

SPUDS ***What better way to be introduced than to introduce yourself. This is this next writer's little snippet: "My name is Keith, and I was an inmate at Alameda County Juvenile Hall in 1998 and 1999. I am wondering how I can get a hold of copies of the paper from June 1998 to December 1999. My copies were lost in transition through moving a few years ago. I now live in Mountain House, CA. I am planning to move to Reno in July of 2008, and would enjoy reading my past poems and stories. I can pay for the issues if possible to retrieve them. My life hasn't been the easiest since my release, and I am wondering if this segment can go into your next publication, which I can pay for as well." Well, we all know he doesn't have to pay for it, but a contribution would be nice. Anyhow, his poem is very dark. It's about suicide, but we published his little note after the poem because we wanted to show why he had a change of heart. And that suicide is, nine times out of ten, a permanent solution to a temporary problem. He gives us a little update on what's been going on with him these last few years and we appreciate that. We hope the pressures of life don't take him away from keeping in touch...***

EDWARD ATKINS ***Last week we published installment number four of this next writer's 'thoughts' and this week we bring you the finale. He takes us on a journey through his mind while reflecting on his past. From the girls he's been with to the group homes he's been in and out of, this is definitely an epic story. As we've realized the nickname he gives us probably has something to do with the gang he's involved in, we couldn't bring ourselves to publish it. We apologize for that, but we are guests of the system and don't want to threaten losing our access into juvenile hall because of thoughts that we're promoting the gang lifestyle. Well, with that said, we really enjoyed he story and so we have a feeling you'll enjoy it too. He's writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA.***

Thoughts Finale

...to experience is to live, to live is to endure, to endure is to explore... life in its purest form...

Today as I stare into the on going view of nature and rain washes away the innocence I am led to believe that life does have its positive aspects. Although physically I'm incarcerated, mentally I am free of society's ills often projected by the wicked minds of its in habitants. The best part of living is being able to relive moments of euphoria within one's mind and gravitating to such, dissecting each and every pleasantry. My life wasn't and hasn't been the best, but I'm content that I was able to endure the experiences whether good or bad...

Well as I left off, one day things started to get heated between me and Mary and I soon found myself becoming more and more fond of her. As for my relationship with DeAnn I'd say things started to simmer down in the affection factor. Often we wouldn't speak because in a matter of a few words we would be in a full fledged argument. Me and Mary were heavily into each other plus it was normal to get lost together in illegal stimulants.

After about 2 1/2 months my interactions with Mary started to become stale and pretty much boring, because we always did the same thing, nothing ever seemed spontaneous. Just as we drifted together, we easily floated apart. As my blossoming bond came to an end I was struck with the notion of reconciling with DeAnn in hopes of us making it as one. Meanwhile Trevor and I ended up having a major falling out which resulted to a physical altercation but unbeknownst to me the fight wouldn't be fair.

As I got Trevor to the ground one of his brothers kicked me in the back of the head and knocked me unconscious. My homeboy Lonnie couldn't assist me because he was absent when the assault went down. In the end I had a severely fractured nose and stitches in my month. Boy did I look like a pitbull. Emotionally I felt sour and couldn't bear to look at myself in the mirror, not because of my injuries, but because my pride was bruised due to me not learning to accept a loss. Conveniently things took a turn and I found out that Robert (my social worker) made it possible for me to live with my maternal sister in Alaska. Ironic aint it, but just before I was to leave I got the chance to go to my first foster home (my God mother's) and hang out until I left.

Everyday me and DeAnn spent time together and reluctantly she gave into my wants and we did the do, boy did I love her for that. It struck a nerve when I realized that I would not be able to see her for a while. She even ditched summer school to be with me my final days. As I boarded my plane the few people I considered family emotionally bidded me farewell and as I stood there in tears at the terminal gate I wondered if in fact I would ever see them again.

Upon my arrival in Fairbanks, Alaska I was taken aback by the purity of the land. I mean there wasn't much smog, a lot of forest, and the hospitality of the residence was ten times better than California. My big sister and grandmother picked me up at the airport and Robert decided it was best to rent a car because he planned to view the wilderness. When we got to the air force base and to my sisters house I couldn't stop looking and asking questions about any and everything. My sister had her friends at her house and they all immediately took a liking to me, which was grand. The one I like most was Aurora, she had a sexy New York accent.

Life on the base was complicated because never have I been anywhere where the people are outgoing even if they didn't know you. After a few months I became popular amongst the girls mainly because I was the new kid that was a die hard gang member from California with popularity also came envy from the regular kids that were dubbed military brats. I had my run-ins with quite a few dudes for what I'm still not sure. Shortly after my familiarity with the base and its occupants I quickly established a crew of hard knocks mainly I made the weak knock around kids strong and loyal to one another and I was crowned the leader of our group.

Mainly we smoked pot, blacks, and mild Newports and drank liquor. So I sunk back into my old ways. I ended up getting kicked off of the base and hurting my sister emotionally because as a kid she always dreamed of regaining custody of her brothers and sisters since my mom got incarcerated. Eventually I came back to California and I was placed in another group home in adversarial turf. Once I enrolled in Washington Prep High in L.A I fell hard into negativity. I started ditching, carry guns, and awoling like it was the thang to do. I stayed there for about 8 months. During my stay at Sand Hill I got the chance to meet my biological father for the first time. Also got to know my paternal sister and brothers. Me and my dad, I'd say, tolerated one another. At the end of my 8 months I requested to stay with my maternal aunt in Lancaster and once again Robert made it possible. For some reason or another I was constantly on a straight path for destruction.

I hit Lancaster and I got worser than before — gang fights and other crimes I choose not to speak about, but one thing is I fell madly in love with this girl named Gabriella. I'm talking so much to the point that if I didn't talk to her I'd go crazy and often we'd talk for 6 or 7 hours about nothing. Well later in our relationship she said she was pregnant and for that reason I'd say I started taking and making drastic measures in attempt to prepare for a baby to feed and a girl to support. My wrong doings got me in jail because of my desperation. I regret it because in the end she wasn't pregnant, she was in the early stages of having the flu. Man, do I feel stupid.

She came back in my life for about a year and a half then she said that she was cool on a jail bird. I get out in a couple years and although Gabriella shook me I still love her deeply. Since my last entry of thoughts I've gotten a letter from my mother and she informed me that my ex girlfriend Kiera has a girlfriend now. Oh well guess jail has gotten to her more than me. I plan to take these couple years I have left to rehabilitate my self for real. Jail is not what it's about and where its at. The liberty to make your own decisions in life is the true definition of freedom.

SERGIO ***Writing from the California State Prison — Solano in Vacaville, CA, we give you a man of 'righteous thought.' He let's us know how to get on a path of righteousness and from his writing we can tell he's an intelligent man. He sort of walks us through the way to keeping your mind 'above water' and remaining head strong... We enjoy writing like this because it inspires us to be better people. How often are we bombarded by images and words that try to destroy us? It's nice to know that everyone isn't like that in this world.***

Righteous Thought

In order to promote all righteousness within all that are willing to learn. And to fight all that falls within the negativity that is a miss guide ness. We must at all times understand that negativity is a form of evil and will find a way to punish all that allow it to! So let's be smart and take control of all you do for the betterment of all the righteousness that is within yourself.

We as people have the will power to continue forward in this world so let's use our head strong and our minds to endure all the obstacles that will try to get in the way of your righteous way of living. So in order to continue forward you must keep in mind that all is not easy. There will be hardships so in order to overcome one has to focus and stay strong so one can continue on his/her righteous path. So let's take all we do very serious and continue forward so at one time or more we must elaborate on all so one can understand and fulfill all that we set our self to do.

We have the ability to challenge all the obstacles that befall our way and we will benefit from each and all obstacles so keep your heads up and at all times be aware and stay alert and keep your minds and hearts full-functioning it is a war out there in this cold world. So always keep in mind continue forward. And stay safe and strong!

JEREMY TOWNER

A true Beat Within all-star in this next writer with his incredible stories, random thoughts, and powerful poetry, we give you a man who needs no introduction. However, this editor would be out of a job if there wasn't an introduction, so we'll put something together for Jeremy. In his first piece, he writes a poem titled, 'My Troubled Soul,' where he maps out the reasons why is soul goes through so much. Then he concludes with a piece about what it means to 'conquer our fates.' We love the last line, "Step by step, beat by beat" because that's what it really takes. And as corny and cliché as it may sound you really have to take things one step at a time. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA if you don't already know. Get used to seeing his name printed in our pages for he's quickly become a Beat VIP...

My Troubled Soul

Life is a calling to the soul
Of which we each play a role
From birth to death a path we walk
The answers to life we must unlock
Hidden within are the answers we seek
When hopes are lost and times are meek
Our hearts so young led astray
The curiosity of evil a price we pay
And in the darkness our cries unheard
To chaos we turn unperturbed
Seeking for answers we refuse to see
The light of life as it's meant to be
We struggle and fight against what's right
Step by step we ruin our lives
Our minds are shrouded in a dark like fog
Further enveloped in all that's wrong
So day by day I long to hear
The angels song coming near
To call me home before my birth
To feel the warmth of heaven's hearth
But my sorrow deafens all my thoughts
For I grieve for the life that I have lost
I'm ashamed for all that I have done
Deaths cold hands from what I run
And I fear a wrath yet unseen
Unto my heart I must now lean
For death comes to all that lives
And for us that take we all must give
So now I wait to receive my fate
And hope that it's yet not too late.

Conquering Our Fates

There exists, in our future, a mountain to overcome. A mountain of many paths that leads to our dreams. So futile seems the climb that many would not attempt to achieve the great heights.

But the few who walk the paths of righteousness are given the gifts for the journey. Whether it be wisdom, knowledge, healing, or prophecy depends upon what you seek. For those who seek for selfish gain wander in circles at the bottom of the mountain searching, looking for their paths to greatness forever lost. Those who shed their evil intent and understand that to live one must hate what one loved and love what once was hated. To let go all that we hold dear to our desires and turn to the light far in the heavens. Then our paths be revealed and our journey truly begins.

We may slip, we may fall, but can never give in to who we once were. We will step to the beat of our hearts on foot at a time and though the journey seems long we draw ever closer to our higher power. Step by step is the mile walked and so beat by beat our voices in our hearts will guide us ever higher. Step by step, beat by beat.

LORENZO COURSE

If you're into writing that'll get you thinking deep, then you should definitely read this next song. He goes from singing to rapping, then rapping to singing so you know he's multi-talented. He speaks of how his music should spark a fire under us as a way to influence change in the world — a revolution. Sometimes, like all geniuses, it was hard to understand him, but the way art is expressed doesn't matter because this is a very big part of him he's shared. And we really appreciate it. In fact we can't wait to hear more. So if you're on the lookout for more great songs like this, beware of this return address: San Diego, CA. Lorenzo writes us from a correctional facility in San Diego, CA.

Love To The Revolution

(Singing Part)
So much violence in the streets, needs solutions,
Education's war picket signs
Overseas, man beg for food to help feed homeless
Got a nickel or a dime.
Some fear street life, some stand and fight
Against politics, three strikes,
World don't need no hate, war
What is it good for!
Baller confusion love to the revolution
Music my soul inspiration to reach the children
Silver and gold I just want to reach the nation
Speckle, speckle little acknowledge though my music
Lift the nation my destination
Ghetto harmony drinking pure from the fountain,
We all be shoutin'
Out "victory" lord knows what the future hold
Let the truth unfold
Music is inspiration world my anticipation,
Love to the revolution
Mother cry, innocent child standing by
Asking why world my anticipation,
Love to the revolution mother cry,
Innocent child standing by asking why

(Rapping Part)
Traffic jams war zone need love at home
Calif., world wide more nine to five,
Too much robbing and jacking
Who sold the gun, pull the trigger, who stand to fight
Man in black bring white,
Brown 50 states different race
Made the world a better place
No time to hate, lets get it right,
Taking my stand, understand street life,
Unite lets touch bases
At-ease soldier steppin' and stoppin', thugin' and sulatin'
World wide ghetto kids city from struggle survival
Over years wippin' the tears openin' eyes ghetto child in here
Givin' them hope keepin' faith spirit inside
Dream alive made back to the block "high-five"
Motivate, educate, anticipate bring solutions
To the table X street knowledge's flippin' flo highs and lows
Ghetto children follow yo' goals here-a-rose a touch of my water,
Feel the souls, war baller confusion
Love to the revolution twenty-one gun salutin'

(Back to singing)
World my anticipation, love to the revolution
Mother cry, innocent child standing by, asking why

World my anticipation, love to the revolution mother cry,
Innocent child standing by, asking why

(Lets break it down)
A-America, B-Brave, C-Constitution, D-keep the Dream alive, E-Economics, F-keep the Faith don't have no fear, G-Greatest in me and you H-we all Heroes I-see clearly now after the rain is gone J-more Justice and peace K-Dr. King and Mrs. King love all of us L-Lord to Lord M-Motivation N-lift the Nation O-Opportunity P-Power to the people...

World my anticipation, love to the revolution mother cry, innocent child standing by, asking why

JAIME ESTRADA *We've got four knock out poems from a heavy weight writer, so we suggest you read on. Our two personal favorites were, "The Little Boy" and "An Open Book" because it shows how courageous this man is. He shares things about himself that most people are too afraid to. Like being the little kid who had no friends besides the neighbor boy, or not having things to play with like most other kids. But as he shares these things we know that in the end he's prevailing because he gets to see where he was versus what makes him the man he is today. He's writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA, we hope he enjoys this issue as we've enjoyed his latest installment...*

How To Forgive

It takes a lifetime to learn to live
How to share, how to give, how to forgive
How to face tragedy that comes our way
How to face courage, to face each day
How to smile, when the heart is soar
How to go on when you can't take no more
How to laugh when all you want to do it cry
How to be brave when we have to say goodbye
How to still love when our loss is so great
How to forgive, when I only urge to kill
How to be sure that God is really there
How to forgive, if I really don't care.

The Little Boy

A little boy plays in the yard
He's very poor and life is hard
A rubber ball his only toy
His only friend, the neighbor boy
He kicks the ball and runs to first base
A smile appears on his face
His mother keeps a watchful eye
She's filled with pain that makes her cry
It's hard to see her boy like this
Nothing to offer only a kiss
Her little boy grew up so fast
She knew that hard times couldn't last
But all she thought he didn't learn
He joined a gang and took a wrong turn
A phone call made from county jail
They boy said:
You did what you can, I made my decision like a man
He craves the past when he was free
I know because that boy is me...

Time Machine

Years, months, days they come and go so fast
Like a flash of light
That travels to the past
I remember when I was a kid
No worries nothing but wonderful stories
Another day, another night
Childhood, everyday so bright
Christmas, my favorite time of the year
A hug from mom, the gift you always wanted
Life so beautiful, so fulfilled
I remember back to them years
Miss 'em a lot, so I hold them deep in
My heart so dear
Time machine, take me back to them
Years, so mom would wipe away my tears
Hug me, tell me everything will be okay,
Time machine, Travel to the past
Broken down at last
But these memories will stay with me
Forever as long as my memory
Can remember...

An Open Book

An angry soul is what I have, violence and hate
Is in what I grew up but can I face reality and
Show my true self?
Everybody has secrets of his own so I will
Put mines in my poems for everyone to see
So you could feel a part of me as you read
Don't judge this book by its cover, you can
Always be wrong it could turnout to be the
Best read of them all, so I'm with open
This book as of now, a little old and turned out
From hand to hand passed all around
But a little love will go a long way to take care
Of the book and the pages will not fall away
Life is very easy but we must learn to
Understand to not hate and put down our
Fellow man, but if you're raised by wolves
You become a hunter of the land, like me
Born from an angel but raised by the beast
All my life I been having a feast
But lord! I beg you please don't let this
Hate stay with me forever. Bring into
My life a little light show me that you
Care give me just one touch
Secrets of my own will be no more
I'm shaking the pages with you so I could
Start to shine like gold
Don't judge a book by its cover
Feel it in your heart, don't let the
Pages get torn apart
So I leave this book wide open
So you could start to read it from
Beginning to end. And hopefully
You can understand
That I crave to be a changed man
Thank you for your care and warming
Touch to all the readers
This book appreciates it so much...

Everybody has secrets of his own so I will
Put mines in my poems
for everyone to see
So you could feel a part of me as you read

Dear, Mr. President

STEPHON WILLIAMS ***Here's another 16th editorial note contest submission and the main point in this letter to the president is, "take care of what's going on over here before you go meddling in other country's business — a hard lesson, but a good one nonetheless. Anyhow, this editorial note contest just stresses how incredible a resource this publication is. For while people spend whole lifetimes trying to ignore the problems in our society by turning our back on our 'inmates,' we attempt to give a voice to them because we know the wisdom that lies behind such an experience as incarceration. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. And we hope people read this to get a better picture of why our lives are so messed up to begin with.***

I am one of those (mad) people of the state communities that you have either 1) forgot about, 2) don't care about, or 3) just plain refuse to acknowledge that you've got bigger problems with his own peoples? The people of United States of America. You've done nothing but hit us with nothing but total grief, sending the prices of gas and oil, taxing the elderly folks, short cutting their social security and taking money away from the handicap and the homeless. You won't bring down the price of housing (so that people, who don't have a place to call home, may do so).

Look at New Orleans, LA when Hurricane Katrina hit... You did nothing to help the people... But they did manage to send it the "Red Cross." Who really did nothing to help the peoples... but they did steal the money that was supposed to be used to help. This was the money that came from hard working people from all over these states to help those who were in need. Where were you Mr. President? On vacation playing golf... Oh yes! The media had put you on camera (TVs.) living it up while people were dying. Did you stop, and come back to help. No! You said in your own mind... My going back, cutting my vacation short won't stop those people from dying? How would you even know that you did not even make an effort to come back and try? You sir, are a poor excuse of a man to let those people suffer as they did.

But we the people of the world do see that oil is #1 with you, since you're a part of it? You've made many deals with those Iraq's for their oil, why? It just amazes me how all of this fits right into place with all of those meetings you, Condoleezza Rice and Donald Rumsfeld is having behind our backs? You only show us what you want us to see.... You're not slick. You're still making deals behind our backs right now. You're printing up new money to line the pockets of the government not the people. Shame on you Mr. President, shame!

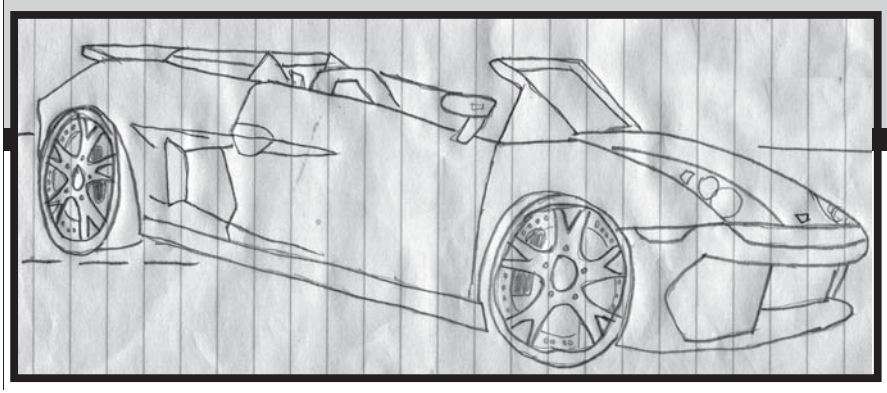
Mr. President you've caused this war? That's right, you did!! You did not, no way, no how have to put your nose where it did not belong. You've killed innocent woman and children, because of somebody else asked you to come and help? It's none of our business or any of yours Mr. Prime Minister Tony Blair. Now look North Korea is testing Nuclear Bombs. Ones that can reach California. Big nose has done it once again. You must stop your testing of those nuclear bombs! And to top it off you must immediately disarm them. North Korea's responded to that statement was simple. They tested two more! It's your mess and you're counting on the people to clean it up? The same people to which has put you in office, the same people to which has their faith, trust, loyalty, husband/wife's, sons/daughters in your hands. The same one's who thought you would keep them safe from harm. This war that you caused by "not" minding your own business and tending to the United States of America business caused this war. Iraq and Iran can deal with their own political war. You should be dealing with the things that are going on around this nation of ours. Instead you're over there having been doing all of the fighting... losing lives because you won't call them back home.

Are you mad? Literally, Mr. President have you lost your mind or something? You and your government have yet to deal with the real problems that are going on right here in the states. Such as, the homelessness... it would be very helpful if something could be built everywhere homeless people are. A place where they could go to get free Medical Assistance. Because the homeless people gets sick just like the rest of us... Quicker than most of us. So what do you plan on doing to help them? Also don't you think that it's truly unfair those of us who are being released from prison, who have an education, work experience capable of doing the job that some company is looking for... Won't hire us. Don't you think that's a form of job discrimination? How can you wake up to face another day of doing what you do, and these states in which we all have once upon a time pledged allegiance to is actually falling apart right before our eyes. You stand in front of a camera almost every chance you get and you purposely lay to the same ones who put you in the position that you're in today. Don't you think that you owe it to us, the people of which you and your government, has your foot upon our necks demanding that we fight for your pleasure.

For you see Mr. President I know that you're playing a chess game with the armed forces. And you might have a bet on the side with some other nation? You once said that you'll not stop this war... you'll not bring home our troops. That's because you're a very small minded little man, who uses his power to compensate for the lack of other things. Don't you understand, that it don't matter about how big, small, little or tall you are, it's all about how you use it. You've not only misused these states (all 50) but you've also misused and damaged the people within! Ah, but here's where things go wrong once again... A cease fire came into play for a couple of weeks. But just as you turned that corner to go home the fire started right back up. What are you going to do when you don't have any more pawns to play with Mr. President? Maybe us prisoners? Do you think your government can trust us with guns in our hands? Yeah right! Highly unlikely. The states and the cities within those states don't trust us to work for them, to show them that we've turned over a new leaf. So I know we're not going to get a fair shake in life.

You also need to be checking on the more important matters concerning the communities of which the citizens of the United States live in. Police brutality has been taking place. Yes the police feel as though they have a license to do harm to innocent humans begins. Some of us do things that are against the law, (sometimes to provide for our families). But this does not give the police the right to beat them like how they're doing. I have a few more things to bring up, but if I do that. It would lead to different subjects. So I'll just leave you with this one last thing. Take care of your own business over here in the U.S.A, we're in the most need of attention.

A man of the community, one voice of the world, concerned parent! Yours truly,



Look at New Orleans, LA when Hurricane Katrina hit... You did nothing to help the people...

ADAM AZEVEDO ***We are so blessed to have met this man through writing because he's one of the best writers we've read in a while. We're also blessed to have met in person the outstanding woman who's keeping in contact with him. She's really an inspiration to us all as she volunteers and is becoming somewhat of a pioneer to help out young people. Well, this is his introduction so we apologize for veering off to other subjects. He's writing from Sonoma County Jail and we demand that you read on. He writes a poem about a man who died in his cell while coming down from crystal meth. He compassionately gives the perspective of both the man who passed and the man's mother. Talk about empathizing with someone else's circumstances. Then he goes on to expose what he feels about our government, mainly the president, and the title, 'Hypocrites,' lets you know how he feels. His third piece is a tribute to Jesus and he concludes with a wonderful song that basically is saying keep your head up no matter what because 'the wind still blows,' and we must move on. We're liking this young man and his writing more and more... In fact, we're becoming addicted... Is there an AAA Adam Azevedo Anonymous... Just kidding...***

Hypocrites

Lives are ended
Families broken
All because a Texas Ass has spoken

Send more troops
Get more oil
Cause religious blood to heat and boil

Money's made
Votes are cast
Dead Iraqi boys and girls we will look past

We keep a toll
Of our own
More and more never coming home

People will die
For what they believe
Or for oil that Texas Ass won't himself retrieve

Don't we know our own backyard is dirty?
25% dead or in jail by 30

Spend money here
Not overseas
Heal a broken home; hear a child's plea

Shattered dreams
Litter our streets
Families sleeping under newspaper sheets

The hardest workers
Just let them stay
That 25 cents an hour for college may pay

They flock here from other lands
Then we bomb their homes with bloody hands

Bush, Hitler, Stalin
...Blood brothers
Never soothing heart broken mothers

Yes ma'am your little boy will be fine
Sorry ma'am your boy stepped on a land mine

These murderous plots
Supported by the church
As a Christian man it hurts

Why do we hate?
Why do we judge?
Why won't the prison system fold or budge?

Rehabilitation may count in scrabble
Actions from the courts
Don't back their worthless babble

Our children watch while their family splits
All because far too many vote for hypocrites

Unknown Grave

This poem was written an hour after a 28-year-old man died in his cell due to a stroke while coming down from crystal meth. Yes, the disease does kill. I'm writing this while those in cells around me laugh and joke and bargain over who gets his blankets and who gets his pillow. Do we really think we're that invincible? It could have been us. Yeah, I'm sure he thought he was too strong to die too. Moses... this is for you.

The door clicks, the cement floor chills my feet
Alone in the dark, and yet unable to sleep
I stare at the ceiling, my head starts to spin
My mind begins to race, retracing the steps into this mess that I'm in
Running from something, and finding nowhere to hide
On this green vinyl mattress, why do I feel like I'm burned alive?
My chest begins to burn, a fire igniting near my heart
I've got to call for help, but a breath is a hard enough start
Unable to breathe, I roll off my bed
In this unknown grave, who will even care if I'm found dead?
I hear voices, are they angels or demons?
I hear footsteps, but my eyelids are too heavy to see them
Someone at the door, the Reaper has come
I prepare myself for the death that has now begin
A light shines in my face; maybe help has come to save
Maybe there's hope, a rescue from this unknown grave
The light at my door walks briskly away
He won't return, I guess I'm here to stay
The breaths become slower, my arm becomes numb
The voices around me slow down to a hum
They say death is easiest for the one who has passed
Whoever says this has never breathed his last
The pain is passing; I'll soon be at peace
Why cry out? No one can hear my pleas
The blood warms my lips but inside it runs cold
A life left unfinished, found dead at 28 years old

Part II (from Moses' Mother):
A mom rolls over, something stirs in her heart
Mother's intuition is tearing her apart
Something's wrong, she just has that feeling
Looking up, staring blankly at the ceiling
She feels his pain, but her hands seem tied
Her heart breaks, knowing her baby is dying inside
She hoped he'd be safe, and life wouldn't be too cruel
She never could have known the police would serve as death's tool
A mother's love is life's strongest bond
Now the light of that love is fleeting... gone
She feels helpless, there's nothing she can do
Maybe she's dreaming, maybe this will pass too
But she knows it's real and her boy she cannot save
All the while he lies in an unknown grave
Through an endless night, the sun begins to rise
Now her heart breaks and no one hears her cries
Then the phone rings, she knows what it means
She picks it up, the tears fall down in streams
"Sergeant who? You're calling from where?"
"You're so sorry. What are you saying, acting like you care"?
Come down to the jail, there's a body to identify
Memories overwhelm her as she prepares to tell her baby goodbye

Lives are ended
Families broken
All because a Texas Ass has spoken

The Wind Still Blows

Verse 1
He comes home early, with flowers in hand
Waiting for weeks for this night he has planned
It's been a while since they've been alone
Living separate lives though in the same home
Life just got busy but now he'll make it right
"I'll start over again with her, and it will start tonight
We've been together for 8 up and down years
We've shared many laughs and twice as many tears
We loved each other once, I hope it's still there
Hoping to light a spark, to fire romance in the air"
He's three hours early, pulls up to the door
Reaching for the door, placing the flowers on the floor
The door's locked, he's a bit surprised
He grabs his key as he asks himself why
At four in the afternoon the door's usually open
This is not enough to ruin the night for which he was hoping
He steps in and hears some Marvin Gaye music
Turns his head and he's ready to lose it
Together as one, in his favorite chair
His wife and best friend, the smell of wine and sex in the air
They don't even see him, just a fly on the wall
He's experienced loss, but now he's lost it all
He wants to rage, anger burns inside
He clears his throat, they scatted with no where to hide
Excuses pour out, sorry fills the air
He shakes his head and walks off, like he doesn't even care

Chorus
Life hurts, it burns but then it fades
Life is never easy so dream of better days
Most things you can't control, God only knows
But no matter how hard it gets, the wind still blows
So get movin', look up and move on
Don't sit in the pain, do life because tomorrow it may be gone

Repeat Chorus

Verse 2
The phone rings, the called ID catches her attention
She's cleaning her house, now she stops with apprehension
She pushes talk, a solemn voice fills the line
Can we talk now Ms. is this a good time?
She says I guess so, should I come to your office?
Maybe that's a good idea, it might offer some solace
This can't be good; her mind starts to wander
A fifteen-minute drive for her to anxiously ponder
What could this mean? Is it about those blood tests?
She'll soon find out, hoping her mind can find rest
The short drive seems like forever
The tests she took late, thinking better late than never
Now she'll know for sure, I guess the time has come

ADAM AZEVEDO (CONT.)

You can dodge much in life but from your fate you can't run
She's ushered into a room that smells like plastic
Whatever it is she'll face it, refusing to look past it
The Doc comes out with a limp shake and a fake smile
Please Doc, make it quick, I've got to be somewhere in awhile
It's a white life, but she can't stand this sick place
She doesn't know what's worse, the disease or the Doc's fake concerned face
He says I'm sorry, but the tests show it's too late
We can't stop the disease in this advanced state
How long Doc, she says without any fear
Well Ms. It will take a miracle for you to last just one year
Well I guess I best go, I've got some news I must give
I've got a lot to do plus some life left to live
She stands up to leave, her shoulders back, her head high
Refusing to let a single tear drop from one crystal blue eye

Chorus
Repeat twice....

Verse 3
He moves back home to the town he was raised
Thinking of a new life, forgetting the painful days
He gave her everything just so he could move on
He doesn't ask why or what he could have done
He never heard her lies or her cries to get out of the web she had spun
He partially blamed himself and for that he'd feel pain
Wondering if he could ever love a woman the same
Then he met Shelly and her heart full of gold
She's thirty now but told she'd never live to see thirty-three years old
For three years she's lived life to it's best
Wondering when fate would put her faith to the test
Her one-year to live came and it went
So did any regret over the time she had spent
Her life is a miracle so she lives full of hope
Though waiting to die alone she just couldn't cope
Then she met James and saw his heart full of sorrow
Now together they live, just livin' for tomorrow
Don't live in the past and the future's a gift
Experience life, don't regret what you've missed
Yeah life's unfair but so are casinos
People lose a fortune at blackjack and bingo
And yet they smile and soon they come back
The same is true in life; get up and back on track
Nut it up, face the music because God only knows
No matter how hard life gets, the wind still blows

Chorus
Repeat twice....

From The Virgin's Womb To The Empty Tomb

A young woman who'd never been with a man
Became the fertile soil to bring upon God's plan

Nothing random in God's perfect mind
His plan to save since the beginning of time

Birth brings joy, hopes and endless dreams
But no one could have known what this birth really means

A miracle Baby, perfect in every way
On the ground with animals, what a first day

He could be anything: a doctor, a warrior, his Father begins to sing
All the while his Mamma knows Him to be her King

Life is good, the birth couldn't come too soon
The world' savior, coming from a virgin's womb

From birth means the descent to the grave
His birth couldn't do it, only His death could save

His special life would pay the ultimate cost
Doing God's will that no child would be lost

Knowing all along His destiny lie in pain
Turning the world upside down, never to be the same

He was born to die, what a purpose to live for
He had no money, but He couldn't have gave more

On a splintered cross, His Mom begins to cry
She accepts God's plan, never questioning why

There's only one way for God to save us all
Calvary's cross faces him from the time he could crawl

Only one thing would cause more joy than the Baby in the virgin's womb
And that's three days after his death, the incredible empty tomb

Celebrate his birth; let His death bring us joy
So much of us to ask of that perfect Baby Boy

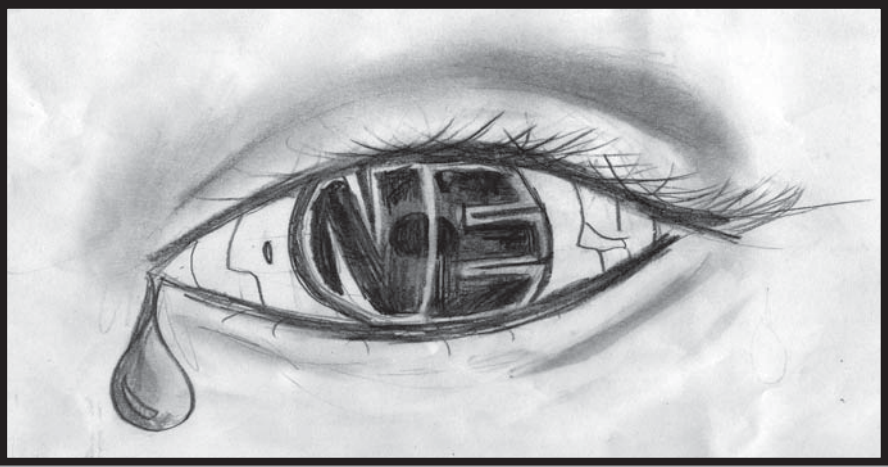
G. ALVARADO ***Writing from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA, we give you a man whose poetry is unique in a marvelous way. Usually going with the three to four word lines in his poems, he gives us several this week, and we can't even begin to express our gratitude if this publication is going to have an end. He chops his lines up, but does so like a conductor, with precise thoughts and perfect harmony. He writes about everything from his long lost little sister to the effects fear has on a person. And with each poem we feel a sense of relief because we know how great this man's thoughts are. He's becoming one of the most consistent writers in The Beat and for good reason, he's a very good writer. Well, we don't want to stroke this man's ego too much because we have to save some compliments for the next time he writes, which we assume will be soon...***

Maybe It's True

Every beginning
Has an end
Every ending
Has a start...
Holding on
To old tiring ideas
Is a great fault
To give them a second thought
Is not
To relinquish our salvation
To take
The steps
To find the difference
Between the two
Is to crave
A center
In our soul
To know this
Is to seek redemption

Root Beginning

I was once a miracle
I was once a monster
I was once denied
I was once dissolution
I was once a child
I was once a number
I was once a son
I was once a liar
I was once a joy
I was once a burden
I was once a brother
I was once a profit
I was once a hope
I was once a nightmare
I was once a dreamer
I was once alive
I was once a shame
I was once a boy
I was once a freak
Wait!
I am still
A root beginning



Transparent

(Prison's new color)
Glassy buildings
Glassy towers
Glassy TV's
Glassy radios
Glassy rules
Glassy shields
Glassy smiles
Glassy toothbrushes
Glassy soaps
Glassy intentions
Glassy minds
Transparent thoughts
Empty lives
Divulged by ideology
Of nothingness

Beauty

Beauty is subtle
And very polite
Beauty
Is essential
And not
A polished diamond
On a storefront
Beauty is chocolaty
And not
The bitter scorn
In a foul mouth...
Beauty is divinity
And the sudden warm breeze
That is filling
On a cold lonely night
Beauty is romantic
Poetic
Unrelenting
Serene
And it openly
Craves our eyes

A Man's Fear

A man's fear
Lives at the center
Of his existence
It sharpens
And crushes his senses
It shelters him
From his enemies
It trashes and destroys his joy

Powerful as it is
A man's fear
Doesn't let him
Live in peaceful awakening...
All the talk
All the writing
Won't be enough
To save him from his own fear
This has become
The very source of life...

Only a man himself
Can do battle with this demon
It doesn't matter
How much it is said
Or the endless
Time spent in prayer
The fear of a man
Is as stubborn and instinctive
As the lion's fury
It fills him with doubt
Mocks his pretentious
Sense of stability...

I am a man!
I know
What I'm talking about
I've mated
With this beast
It has now become
The host
And I a guest to its domain

Painful mourning
Morning shouts
Child's sorrow
Madness of the mind
Anguish of soul...
It encompasses all
It is alive
And capriciously ahead
Of every step
He tries to take
Fooling and tearing him apart
Manifesting his weakness
Each time
A man feels in his prime

A man's fear
Is rigidly rooted in his spine...
It has no origin
Nor an end in sight
It's undone
Baseless
Concrete...
It breathes life
But kills him inside
A man's fear dwells in his mind

A man's fear
Is rigidly rooted in his spine...
It has no origin
Nor an end in sight

there's a demon on my tail and I just can't shake it.
If I get hit one more time I don't know if I can make it

G. ALVARADO (CONT.)

Gabriela

(written for my baby sister
whom I haven seen or
heard from in years)
It's been so long
And yet
It feels
It was just yesterday
When I held you in my
arms...
I am not even sure
You remember
Only a tiny bundle
Bursting with love, smiles
and wails
It's been awhile
Too long as a matter of fact
You're no longer
That child
Who once bounced around
On an old red carpet
Dragging her favorite doll
(her baby blanket)
and I am no longer
that wide-eyed boy
who almost went crazy
with smiles
when he saw
the radiance
illuminating your eyes...
time is a cruel divider
expanding
even the fabric of life
I can only hope
One day
In a land
Not too far from us
Me and you sister
Will get a chance
To share one of those
moments
When I held you
Close to my heart

The Eyes On The Waters

It is the unexpected smile
That frightens me the most
That aching feeling
In my belly
Always so eager to reconnect
I claim to hate ignorance
And yet
I shower under the currents
Of her waterfall
I lust for love
And adventure
But I can't seem to get past my dimension
I'm looking
For a soul
In morrows of dirty waters
I'm drowning
In despair
And talking
To the eyes staring back....
"It is not their fault, "they
say — "nature intended
for us to be this way"
I saw myself
And ran

EFRAIN TORRES

It can be a beautiful thing when people find God because for some it's a life altering experience. For this writer it was equivalent to finding sunshine 'in the rain.' It's also a beautiful thing when people express the love they have for a power greater than themselves through poetry that fits words together like a puzzle. We usually turn to such a power when we're in a place that's almost unbearable and as a matter of fact, we've heard beliefs that God has made humans weak so we can turn to him time and time again. But whether you use God, or your love for freedom, or anything else for that matter, something needs to happen to break this cycle of incarceration. He's writing from the California Correctional Center in Susanville, CA, and hopefully his faith is strong enough to carry him the rest of the way...

In The Rain

I asked the lord how much he loved me and he said this much! Stretched out his arm and died, just to prove his love.
Now it's him I trust with all my heart
He lifted me up and put my feet upon a rock.
Now I just can't stop lifting up his name,
I ain't ever been the same since he passed my way,
But when it rains it pours and now here comes the thunder.
Sometimes it makes me wonder how I keep from going under.
My brother if you hear me let me know that you're there.
My sisters if you feel me put my name in your prayers
'Cause there's a demon on my tail and I just can't shake it.
If I get hit one more time I don't know if I can make it
But I take it like a man dust off my pants and move forward.
I'm not a quitter I thought I told you I was a soldier.
Gotta hold your salvation with the strength of the lord.
We came too far to give up now so we got to weather the storm.
I'm in the eye of the storm fighting the spirit of doubt.
How come it's raining so hard I'm in this spiritual drought.
I gotta get out before I drown because I just can't get up.
Sometimes it gets so hard I say lord take this cup...
But I know what is up and the life that awaits
A spirit that will forsake me and an enemy that hates me.
Who takes me through this trial is it the devil or the lord.
I know whoever it is this hardship I must endure.
One thing I know for sure is that were in the battlefield.
I seen many get taken out once they let down their shield.
So I gotta keep it real 'cause they my sisters and brothers.
The storm affects us all so we gotta look out for one another
Keep each other in prayer, stand in the gap and intercede
And take refuge in the shelter of the lord's wings.
Above all things keep your eyes on the lord
And don't let go so quick and deny your blessing in the storm.
How come Satan always rains on my sunny days?
I get my fire lit up and he tries to blow it away
I need to stay on the path not the wide but the narrow.
Gotta bind that lying devil and keep my eyes on the sparrow
So many run and hide the first sign of the rain
When all we had to do was pray and ask for one more day.
You may be going through some things can barely hold on
But ya' know when you are weak that's when he makes you strong
You come a long way think about it before you were saved...
'Cause you were slipping into darkness heading straight for the grave. Now look at your life today and all that you have
You see that all these lil' problems really don't seem too bad.
So stand firm like a soldier and let the lord give you grace
And say I fought the good fight and I finished the race.
Don't take the easy way out and let the trials win you over.
Just take a hold of the cross and leave the fighting to Jehovah
Get a hold of the lord, don't let go grab on tight
'Cause he wants to give you peace in your hard times.
You'll see his shine break through the clouds now the storm is gone. This battle has been won because you kept holding on...
There's a blessing in the storm, so keep holding on.
Don't give up now 'cause you got to be strong.
There's a blessing in the storm so keep moving forward.
Stand firm endure like a good soldier
I don't wanna go, I don't wanna go outside no more.

He kicks the ball and runs to first base
A smile appears on his face
His mother keeps a watchful eye
She's filled with pain that makes her cry
It's hard to see her boy like this
Nothing to offer only a kiss
Her little boy grew up so fast

check out the rest of Jaime Estrada's BWO piece on page 50